Football England's World Cup squad

Gascoigne fails to last the pace

David Lacey in La Manga

PAUL GASCOIGNE has played in his first and last World Cup. Glenn Hoddle has decided that the midfielder is not fit enough for France and has left him out of the England squad.

This is not the only surprise. Rio Ferdinand, the 19-year-old West Ham United sweeper, has been included, giving Hoddle an important defensive option. Both Paul Merson, his intermittent international career once more revived, and Steve McManaman are there as well.

Les Ferdinand has won Hoddle's vote over Dion Dublin for the vacancy among the strikers left by Ian Wright's withdrawal with a hamstring injury. As expected, Nigel Martyn, who was impressive against Belgium in Casablanca last week, has pipped Ian Walker for the third goalkeeping place.

Last Sunday the six discarded players were heading home. In addition to Gascoigne, Walker and Dublin, Phil Neville, Andy Hinchcliffe and Nicky Butt have been considered excess baggage.

For Gascoigne the news came as a bitter disappointment. England's lachrymose hero of Italia 90 had been desperate to make up for time lost to injuries and to shake off the bibulous image the headline writers had given him.

Hoddle has made a choice both brave and logical. Gascoigne cannot deny that he has been given every chance to prove his match fitness. Hoddle's decision, moreover, has been taken solely on the grounds of football and fitness issues.

The reality is that Gascoigne was always going to struggle to make the squad after such a long period of inactivity at Glasgow Rangers before he signed for Middlesbrough. And once he started playing regularly one did not have to be an expert to see that he was struggling to keep up.

Clearly the 1½ matches Hoddle gave Gascoigne against Morocco and Belgium in Casablanca during a 48-hour period last week finally convinced the England coach that taking him to France would be too much of a risk.

As late as the Friday night Hoddle was still talking enthusiastically about Gascoigne's skills while consistently adding the rider that "he has to be 100 per cent fit". After taking a day to consider the implications of taking him to the World Cup, the coach reached the conclusion that the midfielder had run out of the time he needed to prove that he would not run out of breath.

Gascoigne's absence throws a whole new light on what Hoddle is planning to do in the problem area of England's midfield. Paul Ince and David Batty were always going to be in as defensive props in front of the back three. Now, for inventiveness and imagination, England have the choice of Paul Scholes, a likely alternative to Gascoigne, the revived Darren Anderton, McManaman with his ability to float and take on defenders for pace, plus Merson's speed and shooting power. Michael Owen will be particularly pleased that McManaman, his Liverpool team-mate and an astute reader of his attacking runs, has survived the cut.

Robert Lee's international service has been preferred to Butt's ability to link up naturally with his Manchester United colleagues Scholes, David Beckham and Gary Neville.

Hoddle's choice of 22 for France may quell rising doubts about his tactics and strategy for this World Cup. The fact that his selection was less predictable than most envisaged suggests Hoddle will retain an open mind in the matter of team selection and tactics.

Nevertheless doubts will persist. Impressive though England were in Rome last October, when Hoddle's team played with patience, discipline and no little skill to hold Italy to 0-0 and assure themselves of a place among the finalists, their performances in the warm-up games have been less convincing.

Such pessimism is surely premature. The team who play against Tunisia will bear very little resemblance, for example, to the oddly assorted sides Hoddle fielded in Casablanca. There he was merely looking at spare parts and making up his mind about Gascoigne.

Above all, Hoddle's squad confirms the strength England enjoy between the posts at one end and in front of goal at the other. Few nations have a goalkeeper as reliable as David Seaman and a striker of Alan Shearer's quality.

Hoddle's 22 for France: Seaman, Flowers, Martyn, Campbell, Adams, Keown, Southgate, Gary Neville, Le Saux, R Ferdinand, L Ferdinand, Anderton, Beckham, Lee, Ince, Batty, Scholes, McManaman, Merson, Shearer, Sheringham, and Owen.



One for the road . . . Gascoigne before his World Cup exit

Cryptic crossword by Bunthorne

Across

5, 11, 25, 21 Society of the 6,11 showing reluctance on wheels (NB: not hardl) (6,4,6,4)
6 Such ground held by go-betweens? (6)
9 Smart family canvassed here? (3,3)
10 Before I go North to cut a tragic figure (8)
11 See 5
12 The end of the upwardly mobile? (5-5)
13 One track on which motorists posture (11)
18 In which Romeo and Juliet enjoy quarrelling (4,6)
21 See 5
22 11's books on the Antarctic shelf (8)
23 Rat swivels in degeneracy (6)
24 The charm of a beast of burden comes with time (6)
25 See 5

Down

1 Hate a man thus? (8)
2 John Gilpin's business is folding (6)
3 Repugnance is instated, perhaps (8)
4 Lethargic movement getting a soldier into trouble (6)
5 Go up river, say, to the summit (6)
7 An unseeded player in the women's quarters (6)
8 Warpaint taken to extremes (4,7)
14 Wireless fence (8)
15 With a grave and distinguished voice (8)
16 Rioja shop built of good adobe (6)
17 One's heads picked from under nature's growth, usually sporangial (6)
19 A supporter of both Big- and Little-Endians (6)
20 Katherine, daughter of Machiavelli (6)

Last week's solution

P	A	G	L	I	A	C	C	I			R	O	O	M
O		A		N		O		N		D		E		E
O	R	B	I	T		C	O	N	C	E	R	N	E	D
P		B		E		K		I		C		O		I
D	A	Y	T	R	I	P		N	I	L	O	T	I	C
E				M		I		G		A		H		O
C	O	M	M	E	N	T	I	S	F	R	E	E		
K		A		D						E		R		F
		P	R	I	N	C	E	S	S	D	I	A	N	A
S		P		A		H		A		C				C
A	P	O	S	T	L	E		D	E	L	I	G	H	T
C		W		O		D		N		O		L		S
R	E	D	B	R	I	D	G	E		S	H	E	B	A
E		E		Y		A		S		E		A		R
D	A	R	K			R	E	S	I	D	E	N	C	E

Friendly: Belgium 0 (4) England 0 (3) (on penalties)

Martyn saves best till last

NIGEL MARTYN produced an outstanding performance in goal last Saturday in the Mohamed V Stadium here to deny Belgium their first victory over England for 62 years — in normal time, that is, *writes David Lacey in Casablanca.*

The Leeds United goalkeeper made save after save as what was essentially Belgium's reserve team consistently infiltrated Hoddle's midfield and found space behind his defenders. Martyn kept his best until last, tipping over a thunderous 30-yard drive from Enzo Scifo in the 87th minute.

Eventually Belgium took the points in the Hassan II Tournament by winning 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out after Robert Lee and Les Ferdinand had their shots saved by Philippe Van De Walle, But even here Martyn had his moment, moving quickly to push Scifo's kick wide.

Hoddle began with a 4-4-2 formation and reverted to three at the back after half-time, when Michael Owen and Rio Ferdinand replaced Gary and Philip Neville. Owen, scorer of the winning goal against Morocco in mid-week, was more subdued here, although he did not enjoy the service he had received from Steve McManaman in the earlier game.

There were momentary doubts that Paul Gascoigne would survive beyond the seventh minute after receiving the flailing boot of Scifo above the left eye. Belgium should have scored while he was being attended to.

Lokonda "Emile" Mpenza launched himself through a channel of space on the left before catching England's defenders square with a high pass into the middle, where Michael Goossens and Danny Boffin were unmarked. Fortunately for England the pair impeded each other in their eagerness to shoot, and Martyn ended up having to field nothing more than a feeble shot from Boffin.

After 45 minutes England could be grateful to Martyn that they were not two or three goals down.

Compared with the opposition England's attack was resting on its haunches, although Graeme Le Saux did surprise Van De Walle just past the hour with a rising drive which the goalkeeper just managed to push clear. Soon after this Paul Merson's sharp volley skimmed the crossbar.

● France lost 6-5 on penalties to Morocco after the teams had finished 2-2 at the end of normal time. The four-team competition's arcane rules meant that France took the trophy.

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Hooligans ruin England's World Cup

Jon Henley, John Duncan and Stuart Millar

THE policeman commanding British surveillance operations at the World Cup in France warned this week that worse trouble was yet to come, after hundreds of English hooligans indulged in a spree of violence and destruction unprecedented in the history of the tournament's final stages.

Amid warnings from the French that they are prepared to use mass expulsions to deal with misbehaving English fans, Tim Hollis, the South Yorkshire assistant chief constable in charge of British police liaison with the French security effort, said England's campaign was likely to be marred by more serious violence.

In a sign that the French authorities are determined to crack down on troublemakers, two England fans were jailed for three months by a Marseille court on Monday after being found guilty of criminal damage and incitement during last Sunday's disturbances in the city. Another, James Shayler, believed to be on the police's list of hard-core hooligans, was jailed for two months.

Only a small number of the fans arrested so far have been known to police, and more violent hooligans are either already in France or on the way, Mr Hollis said. "There were a lot of significant newcomers involved so far. We are under no illusions. Our message to the French is that there are more coming."

After fresh outbreaks of trouble in Marseille on Monday had overshadowed England's 2-0 victory over Tunisia, the French interior minister raised the prospect of mass expulsions for rioting fans.

Jean-Pierre Chevènement said that he was prepared to declare an "absolute emergency" if he considered the disturbances had become a "grave threat to public order". This would allow local authorities to expel hooligans without trial.

The move was backed by Jean-Paul Proust, the Marseille region's police chief, who said: "We don't want them here, we don't want them in our city, we don't want them in France. We're going to send them away and hope they don't come back."

The worst of Monday's violence erupted on Prado beach, Marseille, where hundreds of ticketless fans had been watching the game on a giant screen. As the first England goal went in, Tunisians in a stand above the beach began ripping out seats and throwing them at the England fans below.

A group of 300 English youths responded by jumping barricades erected to keep the two sides apart, throwing bottles, stones and beach chairs. The two sides charged each other until riot police with tear-gas moved in. Police said 16 England fans were arrested, and a total of 40 were due to appear in court.

There were sporadic skirmishes after the game, but by nightfall an uneasy calm had returned to the streets of Marseille — helped by a police ban on alcohol sales in bars and restaurants.

The embarrassment caused to England's reputation is so great that the British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, told MPs that the Government was prepared to consider paying compensation to the French.

Tony Blair called the hooligans a "total disgrace". The Prime Minister said: "It may be a small number of fans, there may be other fans that have been involved, but it is no excuse. The French police have our total support in dealing with them."

Comment, page 12
Sport, page 35



French police deal with a troublemaker outside the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille, where England beat Tunisia 2-0 in the opening round of the World Cup on Monday PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Austin

IT'S FOR THE FANS WHO CAN'T GET IN TO THE RIOT

UN boosts hope of lifting Iraq sanctions

Ian Black

IRAQ was offered a ray of hope this week that sanctions would be lifted when the United Nations said its files on the country's chemical and biological arsenal could be closed within months if outstanding disarmament issues were resolved.

In his most upbeat assessment, Richard Butler, the head of Unscom, the UN special weapons commission, said a new work schedule agreed with the Iraqi authorities could bring verification by August that the country had scrapped its banned weapons of mass destruction.

"The light at the end of the tunnel is today more visible than it has been for a very long time," the Australian diplomat told reporters at the end of talks in Baghdad with Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz. But the United States and Britain, the chief hawks on the issue, both insisted that big gaps remained in Iraq's disclosures.

Under the ceasefire resolutions that ended the Gulf war, Unscom must certify that the disarmament programme has been completed before the UN's oil embargo on Iraq can be lifted. Iraq blames the sanctions for the deaths of more than 1 million people, for the malnutrition of a generation, and the impoverishment of a once-wealthy country.

Mr Butler, who is to report back to the council next week, said he hoped that most outstanding issues would have been wrapped up by August, and he could report in October that Iraq had met its obligations.

If Unscom does give Iraq a clean bill of health, and the Security Council endorses such a report, it would trigger the lifting of the oil embargo, but would not automatically end wider trade sanctions.

When working too hard is a corporate crime

SUCCESS, as every keen young executive knows, comes to those who start early, finish late and take a bulging briefcase home at the weekend, *writes Jon Henley in Paris.* So pity the French corporate climbers who are discovering that working too hard has become a crime.

Before a controversial plan to reduce the working week to 35 hours comes into effect, the government has started raiding firms to make sure executives and other professionals are not putting in more hours than the current legal limit of 39 a week.

"Several thousand violations have been reported at four or five big companies we have looked at," a spokeswoman at the employment and solidarity ministry said. "They are test cases, really. The status of upper-level employees, management and others, has to be clarified."

The raids, carried out by the ministry's 420 inspectors, often on tip-offs from trade unionists, have led to bizarre scenes at some companies, according to an investigation by the International Herald Tribune.

Senior engineers and executives trying to conclude a key contract at a subsidiary of the telecommunications giant Alcatel were surprised to find the job police in their midst at 7pm one evening this year, demanding to know why they were working so late.

In another case, about 1,500 violations of working hours uncovered at a subsidiary of the defence electronics group Thomson-CSF left senior managers facing fines of up to $80,000 each. After negotiations the company agreed to close its corporate headquarters at 7pm every day.

"We have been warned about this," a junior executive at one of the country's leading do-it-yourself chain stores said. "We haven't been inspected yet, as far as we know — but we've been told to be careful. The inspectors can apparently be very devious."

Some reports have claimed that several inspectors have gone so far as to photograph car licence plates in company car parks, and to monitor personal computers to make sure that no work was being sneaked home.

Last month the French parliament approved a draft bill cutting the legal working week from 39 hours to 35 hours by 2000, a victory for the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, who had made the measure a key plank of his election campaign.

The law calls for all companies with more than 20 staff to institute the 35-hour week by January 1, 2000. Smaller firms have two more years to comply.

Finance, page 14

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,600	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Aid agencies can't turn away from tragedy

WE ARE outraged by Clare Short's remarks (End "emotive aid appeals", June 7). Sufficient money has not been available from governments to finance the relief operation that is required in southern Sudan. The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) — an alliance of 12 leading British aid agencies working in the region — launched this appeal because people were dying, and many more will die unless they receive emergency aid now.

The DEC has made clear at all times that this crisis is the result of 15 years of war combined with two years of drought. Humanitarian aid will make a difference, but only peace can provide a long-term solution. As aid agencies our role is to bring help to those who need it. We cannot stand back and allow people to starve. People without food cannot wait for peace.

The British public has once again shown its support and solidarity for those in need by donating $7.3 million in just two weeks. Hardly a case of "flinching and turning away", as Ms Short suggests.

Jamie McCaul,
Disasters Emergency Committee, London

CLARE SHORT is to be commended on her attempt to deepen public understanding of the extent of human rights abuses. That media and solidarity groups focus almost exclusively on the vivid violence of civil rights abuses rather than the slow-motion tragedies of economic depredation is natural in a soundbite-saturated media environment, but deplorable none the less.

However, her criticism misses a vital connection. Economic rights are not imposed from on high, but must be fought for by impoverished communities in a battle against commercial and agricultural interests often tightly bound to reigning regimes. Civil rights violations are consequently often a result of the attempt by one group to deny another economic rights. Through systematic human rights abuses, the political space in which economic rights may be claimed is doggedly shut down.

In Guatemala, for example, the tidal wave of state repression unleashed in the early 1980s civil war targeted not only communities close to guerrilla activity, but anyone involved in developmental activities. Educators, priests and civil leaders were "disappeared" in their hundreds. Prominent plantation owners, whose wealth depended on a cheap, docile pool of labour, claimed that educating the impoverished masses would be tantamount to "converting" them to communism. A 1982 Oxfam report described the political violence as an "effort to suppress a rural development movement".

As addressing civil rights violations is part of the battle for economic rights, solidarity groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are a vital front in the battle for basic economic rights. Ms Short would do well not to forget that.

Aziz Z Huq,
Centre for Human Rights Legal Action, Guatemala City, Guatemala

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COMPETITION between aid agencies was a cause for concern in the mid-1970s when I was a minister at Overseas Development, though it seems to have intensified (Taking a first aid course, June 14). It is time for a comprehensive, independent investigation of the agencies to look at the inevitable wastage from their overlapping bureaucracies, unco-ordinated appeals and conflicting central policy decisions that can confuse not just the message but programme implementation.

John Grant,
Deal, Kent

Painful lessons of gun culture

I AM sympathetic to the struggle of schools as they attempt to deal with violent students (US schools struggle against violence, May 31).

However, what really struck me about the article, was that the larger issue of a gun culture and the easy accessibility of guns was not even raised. As long as students/children have easy access to weapons that are specifically designed to kill large numbers of people, there will continue to be many more Jonesboros and Springfields. While there may be an argument to allow guns for hunting (if the weapons are securely stored and owners licensed), there is no reason why people should own M16s, AK47s and Uzis, which are specifically designed to kill humans.

Americans face a choice of giving up guns and saving their children, relatives, friends and colleagues from early and violent deaths, or keeping their guns and getting used to the growing death toll as the cost of such a decision.

Bill Wilson,
Fremantle, Western Australia

RE "US bans gun sales to UK" (May 3). This is really good news, but it would be even better if the title read "US bans gun sales in US".

Allen R Watters,
Dallas, Texas, USA

Burden of the debt squad

THE lack of progress on debt relief for poor countries is an ongoing scandal (The plague of debt, May 17). The crippling financial burden of the poorest countries has a horrendous human cost: in poor countries more than 1 million children under the age of five die each year from causes directly related to debt. Yet for each $1 in aid received by developing countries last year, $11 went back to Western banks and governments in debt service.

The average debt burden for the world's poorest countries is 94 per cent of their economic output. The social cost of overwhelming debt is unbearable poverty and increased violence. Eight of the 10 most highly indebted countries have suffered civil war or violent conflict since 1990.

What would it cost to rescue these countries from debt slavery? The entire amount at stake is far less than the annual defence budgets of lender countries. Most of the poor countries have already paid back more than the total of their original loans in interest. Yet few have made a dent in the principal.

The leaders of the world's most powerful countries again failed to move forward against debt at the recent G8 meeting in Birmingham. This is simply unacceptable.

Kate Fagan,
University of Victoria, Canada

MAGGIE O'KANE (May 17) tells us that Niger — the world's poorest country — owes Britain $13 million; money that could otherwise be used to inoculate children against a horrible disease. It would be unconscionable and self-serving to wait for an arbitrary date such as the millennium to help relieve these people from such devastating conditions. For pity's sake — tell them they can keep my 15 pence.

(Dr) Iain Coulson,
Hilo, Hawaii, USA

Moved by the spirit

WE GREATLY enjoyed Polly Toynbee's article "The Pope versus the aliens" (May 31). It was a pleasure to read such a well written, incisive and humorous piece, and a surprise to find there are others in the world today who think as we do. If we may suggest another explanation for the fact that we appear to be about to "enjoy" an increased religiosity in the coming century: it could be a combination of "the triumph of capitalism" with an increasing assertion of "the rights of the individual".

Taking this view, one may argue that the monopoly of the Christian myth long enjoyed by the Pope has been increasingly eroded over the centuries, to the point where anyone now can be the "Pope" of some Christian group. There is, in effect a "myth of the month" and a church group to capitalise on it.

We further wonder whether the continual conflict between peoples of different faiths is due to an intrinsic characteristic of the male (selective evolutionary advantage having been obtained by aggressive male behaviour), or if it is a consequence of religiosity.

Martin and Wendy Small,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

THAT'S why I read the Guardian Weekly. The likes of Polly Toynbee's comment on the Pope and the pagans can appear there. While the "need" for some sort of religious, or other supernatural — ie, non-rational, non-scientific — belief and ritual seems near-universal, how can the head or believers of one set of superstitions claim superiority over others?

Alvin G Edgell,
Kent, Ohio, USA

THE weirder reaches of the occult seem to be fair game, but I fear that Polly Toynbee has missed the point when she wonders why "the supernatural permeates the national psyche as never before".

Human life cannot be fully explained by the empirical; truth does matter, but it has never been contained solely in a test tube. One has only to regard a baby, or an old person, to realise that the mystery of human existence can never be fully explicable by reason alone. We are made up of head, heart and gut — all must be brought into balance before we can claim to be mature. People are searching for answers in some strange places, but search they must.

Patricia Kane,
Wellington, New Zealand

Briefly

MIKE BRIDGMAN must be living in some other New Zealand to mine if he thinks that the "structural adjustment" programme has been a success (May 24). Over the last decade we have succeeded only in wrecking our public health system, undermining our egalitarian education system, running down the welfare state and demonising the poor and unemployed.

A country famous for a 40-year record of full employment has now had structural unemployment built into its economy as an instrument of economic management on behalf of the rich, who have also had the tax system rewritten to their advantage. In return we have achieved a miserable growth rate and the largest balance of payments deficit we have ever experienced. And many of our public assets have been flogged off to overseas buyers at bargain basement prices. As Bridgman says, "we are going". He forgot to mention the direction: down the drain.

Tony Simpson,
Wellington, New Zealand

A LITTLE experience, like a little knowledge, can be a dangerous thing. I am glad for Dea Birkett that she was so little affected by the sexual abuse she suffered at the age of 10 (June 7). But she should not on this basis assume that "overcoming the past" is an option open to everyone. Many people simply cannot shake off the past. The associations that trigger their memory, the flashbacks and nightmares are not under their control. Perhaps they suffered abuse more severe and prolonged than that experienced by Ms Birkett. Perhaps also they were not blessed with such a resilient personality.

Stephen Shenfield,
Providence, Rhode Island, USA

THE Guardian Weekly gave the website address for the debt campaign Jubilee 2000, which was not very interesting (June 7). Much more relevant information can be found at http://www.oneworld.org/jubilee2000.

Marian and Bernt Lampe,
Munich, Germany

ACCORDING to historians, the ancient Maya's ballgames sometimes ended with the winners chopping off the losers' heads. If the practice could be introduced over the next few weeks, we might at last begin to eradicate this football pest.

George E Todd,
Hochstadt, Bavaria, Germany

WILL the Stones (June 14) sing to the Chancellor: "Brown sugar, you don't taste so good"?

Valerie Vaz,
Leicester

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One Nation gains divide Australia

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

ABORIGINAL and ethnic groups warned last weekend that Pauline Hanson's One Nation party, which recorded huge swings in the Queensland election, could set back race relations in Australia for decades.

Economists predicted that the anti-immigration party, which also wants to return to trade protectionism, could damage the economy and drive away foreign investors.

The swing to the fledgling party, which captured more than 22 per cent of the first-preference votes under the state's transferable vote electoral system, could have implications for the timing of the next federal election and for federal government policies.

But the prime minister, John Howard, said that while it would be foolish to ignore its gains he would not change course on tax reform and native land title legislation opposed by Ms Hanson.

Many Australians were in shock after the party, which boasts Ms Hanson as its sole federal MP and now has a possible 10 seats in the state parliament in Brisbane, became the third force in Australian politics overnight.

One Aboriginal activist, Ray Robinson, said One Nation's rise meant that indigenous people and Asians might be treated as second-class citizens. Another, Les Malezer, said the result was a disaster that would scupper reconciliation between blacks and whites.

"The most disappointing thing is that the public have shown they're prepared to vote for a party which has at its core agenda attacks on Aboriginal and Asian people on the basis of race," he said.

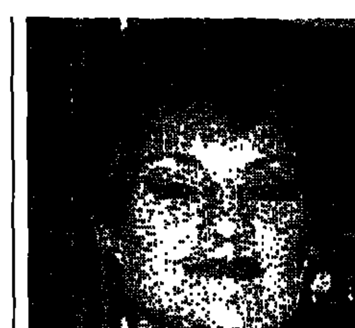
A coalition of 45 ethnic groups said the result would send a message to the world that would hurt tourism, trade and investment.

Ms Hanson responded that although she was branded a racist, no one could point to any racist comment she had made. But she said many Asians were not prepared to assimilate, and that widespread immigration made Australians feel like foreigners in their own country.

"All we ask, all Australians have ever asked, is to come out here, join us, be one of us, but give this country your undivided loyalty and be proud of the new life you have in this country," she said.

Analysis of last Saturday's poll showed that Queenslanders deserted the National and Liberal parties, which form the ruling coalition, in favour of rurally based One Nation candidates. These could hold the balance of power in the state.

The former National party premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, whose old seat was taken by Ms Hanson's party, said: "What she has achieved is a wake-up call to politicians in Queensland and Australia as a whole. It will shake up politics as never before."


Hanson: issuing a wake-up call

Comment, page 12

Bissau battles spark crisis of refugees

Alex Duval Smith in Abidjan, Ivory Coast

WEST AFRICA faced a growing refugee crisis this week as thousands of people fleeing fighting in the tiny country of Guinea-Bissau tried to enter neighbouring Senegal and Guinea after being turned away from foreign evacuation ships.

Rebel soldiers insisted in radio broadcasts that they remained in control of at least part of the military garrison in the capital, Bissau.

A spokesman for the Senegalese army, which is supporting Guinea-Bissau's elected president, João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira, told Portuguese radio it had taken control of the garrison but still faced pockets of resistance.

The rebels deny that their revolt, which began last week, was a coup against President Vieira. They say they want new elections so that corruption in the former Portuguese colony can be rooted out.

On Monday the capital was rocked by heavy shellfire after a brief lull. Forces loyal to President Vieira were trying to capture the airport but were having to pick their way through minefields planted by the rebels.

Whether or not forces loyal to the president — backed by 1,300 troops from Senegal and 700 from Guinea — wrest control of the strategic Bra garrison, the region now has a refugee crisis on its hands.

Senegal closed its border with Guinea-Bissau as soon as the revolt broke out but let in refugees on humanitarian grounds after giving them yellow fever and meningitis vaccinations.

There were scuffles and shooting as refugees were turned away from the foreign evacuation ships last weekend. These people have now left Bissau on foot.

An official in the north of Guinea said that about 1,400 people had sought refuge there. According to one report, 40,000 people have entered Senegal. By Monday at least 2,000 foreign nationals — mainly Portuguese and Brazilian — had left Bissau aboard ships bound for the Senegalese capital, Dakar. They included the United States ambassador and other Western officials.

The evacuation operation, under the command of the Portuguese army, turned to tragedy last weekend when an overcrowded boat capsized and up to 200 people drowned.

Refugee children fleeing Guinea-Bissau wait to disembark in Dakar harbour, Senegal, last week PHOTOGRAPH: JOAO RELVAS

Nigeria frees nine political prisoners

NIGERIA'S new military leader, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, on Monday sent his first clear reformist signal to political opponents and the international community by releasing nine prominent political prisoners, *writes Alex Duval Smith*.

The move came a week after the death from a heart attack of his predecessor, the hardline General Sani Abacha. But it did not extend to the country's most prominent detainee, Moshood Abiola — the presumed winner of 1993 presidential elections.

However, it confirms that Gen Abubakar, a career soldier thought to have few political ambitions despite being chosen for the post by the military's ruling council, wants to release Nigeria from its international pariah status.

The prisoners who were ordered to be freed include such well-known figures as General Olesegun Obasanjo, Nigerian head of state from 1976 to 1979, and Beko Ransome-Kuti, a pro-democracy activist.

But there is cause for caution. The Nigerian military leadership was known for several months to have been riven by Abacha's plan to anoint himself civilian leader by October 1. Monday's move may point to a less hardline approach but there are no guarantees that Gen Abubakar plans a switch to civilian rule.

Last weekend he held talks with five parties set up to guarantee Abacha's election to the civilian presidency. But he has not indicated that he intends to meet genuine political groupings.

Gen Abubakar's press secretary said he had "ordered the immediate release of some detainees and prisoners to facilitate the process of national reconciliation and reconstruction". He added that other prisoners "would be given consideration".

The nine prisoners are being held in jails across Nigeria. The majority are from the military's power base in the north. This raises questions as to whether their release could be a move to consolidate support for the new regime in that region.

Comment, page 12

Ex-dictator held for child kidnapping

Sebastian Rotella in Buenos Aires

THE former Argentine dictator, Jorge Rafael Videla, is under arrest as part of an investigation into one of the most brutal crimes of the 1970s military regime: the systematic kidnapping of children.

Federal police arrested Gen Videla, aged 72, at his suburban apartment last week, on the orders of a federal judge investigating a case brought by relatives of "disappeared" children, the authorities said.

The judge, Roberto Marquevitch, was reported to have ordered the arrest on the basis of five cases in which Gen Videla is accused of covering up the identities of abducted children who were given to military families.

"Videla participated directly in all this horror, from the planning to the training of the torturers," said Hebe de Bonafini of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a human rights group formed by the mothers of victims of Argentina's "dirty war". She added: "We believe in the justice system, but we still have to see whether he remains in jail or whether this is just a political game."

Gen Videla and other former military leaders were pardoned by President Carlos Menem in 1990. But the consolidation of democracy in Argentina is bringing political pressure for the punishment of human-rights abuses committed more than 20 years ago. — *Los Angeles Times*

The Week

THE Japanese car company Mitsubishi Motors has agreed to pay $34 million to settle 300 women workers' claims of sexual harassment in the US.
Washington Post, page 17

A CYCLONE raging along the western edge of India has killed more than 400 people in the state of Gujarat.

AIR FRANCE, the official World Cup airline, reached a surprise agreement with its striking pilots just hours before the opening match.
Le Monde, page 15

FIGHTING between Sri Lankan forces and Tamil rebels for control of a highway has left more than 400 people dead since last month.

MARGALIT Har-Shefi, a friend of the man who murdered the Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was found guilty by an Israeli court of failing to prevent the 1995 assassination.

SWITZERLAND'S wartime reputation suffered another blow when an American-Jewish investigation uncovered evidence of rampant anti-Semitism pervading all levels of wartime Swiss society and of a secret government plan to keep Jewish refugees out of the country.

THE UN Security Council voted to freeze bank accounts of Angola's Unita movement and prevent exports of diamonds from areas it controls, in response to the movement's failure to demobilise and hand over territory to the government, as called for under 1994 peace accords.

FBI agents and a task force from the Texas prison service believe that white supremacists operating in the state's jails were behind the racially motivated murder of James Byrd in Jasper. He was decapitated by being dragged behind a pick-up truck.

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin has promised to investigate fully the death of Larissa Yudina, a journalist in the Russian republic of Kalmykia. She was frequently critical of President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who has announced he will run for the presidency of Russia in 2000.

TAIWAN has been hit by an enterovirus that has claimed at least 36 lives and infected more than 1,200 children. The airborne disease can infect adults but only causes deadly complications in children.

QUENTIN Tarantino, whose fascination with violence has made him a leading Hollywood director, has been arrested on assault charges and faces a $15 million lawsuit for damages. It is the second civil case to be brought against him in a year.

Eritrea faces up to the Horn's Goliaths

David Hirst in Asmara reports on the tenacity of Africa's newest nation

YOU could, said an Arab diplomat, call the Eritreans the Israelis of Africa, "though they're certainly much nicer". The comparison is often drawn. It's a David and Goliath situation. A small newborn state whose existence was achieved by violence is now surrounded, if not by enemies on all sides, then by two hostile states — Ethiopia and Sudan — whose combined population of 100 million is 33 times greater than Eritrea's.

Add to that Ethiopia's greater arsenal, superior air power and advantages of geography, and it should be winning this war hands down. That it isn't — quite the reverse — is attributable to something more than a mere Israeli-style military efficiency.

Last weekend the White House said that the Eritrean and Ethiopian leaders had accepted a United States proposal for an immediate halt to air strikes, after talking on the phone to President Clinton and a diplomatic initiative by Italy. An Eritrean spokesman said: "A cessation of air raids is a partial aspect of a cessation of hostilities, and that's what we want." There was no immediate comment from Ethiopia

Eritrea is unique, certainly in Africa, in that it was founded on a "people's war". Eritreans ultimately triumphed in a 30-year struggle against Ethiopia largely unaided by a hostile, or indifferent, world.

Self-reliance was the supreme virtue; but there were also the national cohesion of nine different ethnic groups, half Muslim and half Christian; an exceptional degree of trust between leaders and people; freedom from corruption; and the fusion of dogma with creative innovation. Since independence in 1993 there has been a deliberate effort to preserve these precious assets, which are seen as vital to the defence of the state.

Sudan, militantly Islamist, is the neighbour with whom the secular Eritrea seemed most likely to find itself at war. But in a larger historical and geopolitical perspective, Ethiopia poses the greater danger.

It is hard, Eritreans believe, for Ethiopia, with its imperial past, to shed an impulse to overrun smaller neighbours, or to readily accept its loss of access to the sea.

Nor is it surprising to Eritreans that Ethiopia, now dominated by its Tigrayan minority, should descend into open war with them, even though the Tigrayans were their allies in the liberation war. The two ethnic groups harbour an animosity towards each other that goes deeper than any alliance of convenience.

It is ostensibly a trivial conflict about borders. Whatever its rights and wrongs, the conflict can be seen as part of a problem involving the internal dynamics of a disjointed Ethiopian state that does not enjoy the national cohesion of its smaller neighbour. The Tigrayans want to assert themselves at the expense of other ethnic groups, notably the formerly dominant Amharans.

The antagonism could be seen in the economic conflict that preceded the fighting. Last year Eritrea introduced its own currency, the nakfa, in place of the Ethiopian bir. The name it chose — Nakfa being where the Ethiopians suffered their greatest slaughter at rebel hands — was hardly tactful, and the move had disruptive consequences for two such closely linked economies.

So it came as no surprise when, with the currency break, Addis Ababa required exporters of Ethiopian maize — on which Eritrea is dependent — to charge three times the market price.

When the antagonism escalated into outright war the Eritreans were ready. They had a highly trained and disciplined army, 30,000 to 40,000-strong, plus 100,000 or so conscripts. There were also a further 60,000 former servicemen doing their obligatory annual month of unpaid work for the state.

As for government propaganda, "We don't need it," said an Eritrean official. "We know that in any emergency the people will mobilise on their own."

Ask an Eritrean about the size of the army and he is apt to reply "3 million" — the size of the population. The hyperbole is justified. Just about every conceivable class of person has volunteered.

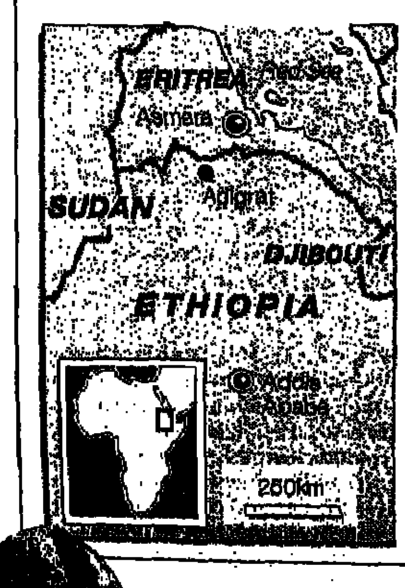
Outsiders are apt to ascribe militarism and expansionism to the Eritreans, pointing out that they have border conflicts with all their neighbours. Diplomats here tend to agree that the Eritreans resort to force more quickly than they should, and that they also draw dubious frontiers in their own favour.

This is the less attractive, pugnacious, us-versus-them aspect of self-reliance, the prickly nationalism of a small young state determined to hold its own against much larger neighbours.

As one of the world's poorest countries Eritrea certainly has problems, but the sense of purpose that it brings to solving them, the progress already made, or popularly expected, counts for much more.

The war will aggravate existing problems, dealing a heavy blow to hard-pressed finances and development projects, but much greater problems, political as well as economic, will almost certainly afflict the other side.

It's not clear if the war is now winding down, or if there will be another great Ethiopian push on the central front. But, judging by results of the war so far, Eritrea is likely to become the catalyst of further upheavals in Ethiopia, as it has often been before.





Ethnic Albanians flee the Serbian province of Kosovo to Tropoje in Albania last week. On Monday Nato sent Belgrade a clear message that force may be used if diplomacy fails by holding air exercises in the southern Balkans. President Boris Yeltsin met Yugoslavia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, on Tuesday for talks that could offer a last chance to avert Nato military intervention over the crisis PHOTO: DAVID SPARK

S Africa 'sought germs to quell blacks'

David Beresford in Cape Town

TRUTH commission hearings into South Africa's chemical and biological warfare programme swung between horror and farce last week with the disclosure of plans to develop race-sensitive toxins and schemes to blow rioters into a state of peacefulness with grenades packed with LSD and cannabis.

Commissioners listened incredulously to the former chief executive of a front company for the military describe attempts to accept an offer of technology to create bacteria that would attack only blacks.

The managing director of Roodeplaat Research Laboratory, Daan Goosen, justified the project by comparing it to the nuclear arms race, saying the intention was not to use the technology, but to secure peace through fear. He said the laboratory was one of the most sophisticated in the world and was superior to the facilities available to the Soviet bloc.

Dr Goosen said the technology offer was made in a document delivered anonymously to the military attaché at the South African embassy in London in 1983 or 1984. It offered a way of developing a bacterium "which has got the possibility of only making sick and killing pigmented people". The author invited the military to place a newspaper advertisement if it wanted to take up the offer.

Dr Goosen said he was then instructed by the head of the chemical and biological warfare programme, Wouter Basson, to investigate the scientific literature to see whether it was feasible to develop such a weapon. "We concluded that it is a definite possibility," Dr Goosen said.

After further discussions with Dr Basson and the surgeon-general of the South African Defence Force, General Neil Knoble, "it was decided it would be good if the government had this weapon . . . as a negotiating back-up".

Arrangements were made for him to fly to London to take up the offer, but the mission was aborted for fear that it was a trap.

Dr Goosen said the surgeon-general had told them the curtailment of the black birth rate was their most important task. According to Dr Basson, the government had falsified the population figures, saying there were only 28 million blacks.

"The census office stopped counting the black people when they reached 45 million. And the government decided that it is not feasible to make known to the public that there are 45 million blacks."

The former head of the police forensic laboratories, General Lothar Neethling, told the commission he had supplied Dr Basson with enough pure LSD to "put 50,000 men on a trip", between 100,000 and 200,000 mandrax sedative tablets, and 250 kilograms of marijuana.

They were to be used to create gases that could be delivered with grenades and used for riot control. Such devices had been made on an experimental basis, but had never been used.

Gen Neethling, who is believed to be dying from cancer, heatedly denied allegations that he had been involved in the manufacture or supply of poisons.

"I am a conservative Afrikaner, brought up in the Dutch Reformed Church, and I don't believe in murder," he said.

Politics opens up after Suharto

John Aglionby in Jakarta

RELEASED from the shackles of dictatorship, Indonesians are seizing their new political freedom with unexpected enthusiasm. Former president Suharto, who allowed only two carefully controlled minority parties to exist during most of his 32 years in power, had scarcely moved out of the state palace on May 21 when people began announcing the formation of new political groups.

Two of them, the People's Democratic party and the Indonesian Democratic People's party, already existed but had been banned and their leaders imprisoned. They have now become legal and have been joined by myriad other organisations.

The Indonesian Christian party and New Masyumi are reincarnations of religion-based parties active when the country's first president, Sukarno, allowed multiparty democracy in the 1950s.

The only conditions that the new president, B J Habibie, has imposed is that all parties must adhere to the state ideology, Pancasila, and must reject communism.

The most controversial is Parti, the Chinese Indonesian Reform party, intended "to defend our rights and create true harmony among Indonesian citizens", according to one of its founders, Mr Ponijan.

Ethnic Chinese, who make up less than 5 per cent of the population of 202 million but control more than 70 per cent of the economy, are a regular target of social unrest. Many fear that Parti will only perpetuate racial divisions.

The biggest casualty is undoubtedly the ruling party, Golkar. One of its largest affiliates has broken away to form a separate party, claiming that Golkar does not represent its members' aspirations.

Now that the millions of civil servants are no longer obliged to support it, and corruption and nepotism are slowly being eliminated, Golkar's days appear to be numbered.

Mr Habibie has not set a date for a general election, but it is not expected before next May, since new political and electoral laws are needed.

Lebanese shamed by hangings

BEIRUT DIARY
Katharine Viner

WE were lying on the beach when we read about the public hangings; sipping Almaza at the Long Beach Club, where you pay $500 a summer to lie on concrete and swim in the pool. We were gazing along the Corniche at the palm trees and the women in bikinis, bangles and full make-up, lamenting a lost age.

Two men, Wissam Issa, aged 25, and Hassan Abu Jabal, aged 24, were hanged at 5am in Tabarja town square, north of Beirut, a place you drive past on the way to the nightclubs of Jounieh; 1,500 people turned up to watch, but the hangmen, who wore white cloaks and pointed hats, were out of practice. The platform beneath the men's feet didn't drop properly, and Issa, who had fainted with fear, had to be pushed off the scaffold.

The dead were left swinging for an hour. The papers printed their broken-necked pictures: wearing sweat-tops, jeans and trainers, they looked like kids.

Their crime was unpremeditated murder: they were robbing a house when the owners came home, and Issa, alarmed, shot them both. Abu Jabal ran off with $500 and jewellery; he didn't even fire a gun.

President Elias Hrawi personally signed the death warrants, adding to the quarter of a million bodies of 16 years of civil war. This is a bewildering truth for many in Lebanon who saw him as a moderniser: just two months ago he was campaigning for civil marriage, an enlightened move to allow marriages between religions — currently forbidden unless one partner converts to the faith of the other.

The campaign has been popular, particularly among women and the young; you even see ads saying: "Mendossa Jeans: Yes for Civil Marriage" in the Beka'a valley. Many think that Hrawi sending two young men to the public gallows makes his rhetoric about a civil society look like a sick joke.

Beirutis are furious. They want to look forward, not back to their notorious war. They've had eight years of peace and find it hard to reconcile their cellphones, Baskin Robbins ice-cream and the world's biggest city centre redevelopment project — $650 million of glamorous hotels, beach clubs and marinas — with the hangings.

Lebanon has always seen itself as the most European of Arab countries; now it is grouped with China, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia as a country that executes its own citizens in public.

Jerir Abu-Shaheen, a company director, expressed the views of many. "Does a world tourist centre perform public executions?" he wrote in the English-language Daily Star. "The sound of [the men's] gasps as the rope snapped tight will echo as one of the most bloodthirsty moments in Lebanon's history — including the war."

Drugs war is 'futile exercise'

Mark Tran in New York

ONE of the stranger moments of last week's United Nations drug summit came as it ended.

"Fraternal greetings from all growers of coca, poppy and marijuana in Colombia," declared Omayra Morales, a member of the Andean council of coca leaf producers, outside the general assembly, while inside presidents, prime ministers and other dignitaries spoke of the need for urgent action.

Ms Morales portrayed the war against drugs as an exercise in futility. Four years ago, she said, the Colombian government said it would end coca cultivation within two years. Coca was then being grown on 100,000 acres. Today's figure was 250,000 acres.

Ms Morales provided a human reminder that the war against drugs is not going well. Since 1961 UN drug control strategies have put eradication of illegal opium centre stage. Yet according to the Lindesmith Centre, an institute backed by the financier George Soros, opium production is rising sharply. Coca cultivation has doubled since 1985, according to UN figures, and drug prices are falling.

Critics of the UN approach warn that eradication efforts will lead to greater deforestation without reducing supply. Coletta Youngers of the Washington Office on Latin America said the United States was "addicted to failed policies". The non-governmental organisation says the increasing use of the military in the war against drugs will undermine democratic rule in Latin America and lead to human rights abuses.

Some UN officials criticised efforts to stamp out drug supply. "Such policies have had no effect on supply, and crop substitution does not work without the development of markets and infrastructure like transportation," said one. But others pointed to the value of discussing key issues such as money laundering.

Although the summit ended with the adoption of an ambitious plan to cut supply and demand, it remains to be seen whether countries will come up with the hard cash to fund the proposal.

It was advanced by Pino Arlacchi, former Mafia fighter and head of the UN International Drug Control Programme, who puts the cost of the plan at up to $5 billion over the next 10 years. That is well above current funding levels; his programme received $160 million for 1998-99.

President Clinton, who said people must "wage this fight around the world and around the kitchen table", did not put any more money on the table for the programme. General Barry McCaffrey, the US drug tsar, was lukewarm about the Arlacchi plan, saying it was too soon to talk about money.

IMF ensnared in partisan politics

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

THE CLINTON administration has been way ahead of American public opinion in its appreciation of the economic and political implications of the Asian economic crisis. While public opinion basks in economic optimism on the basis of the record growth rates of recent months, and jobs have been easy to find in a buoyant labour market, there have been few reasons for anyone to worry.

The administration, on the other hand, has seen the cloud that is taking shape on the other side of the Pacific and has worried about the impact that events in South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan may have on the United States economy and, ultimately, on the chances of Vice-President Al Gore taking over the White House in two-and-a-half years' time.

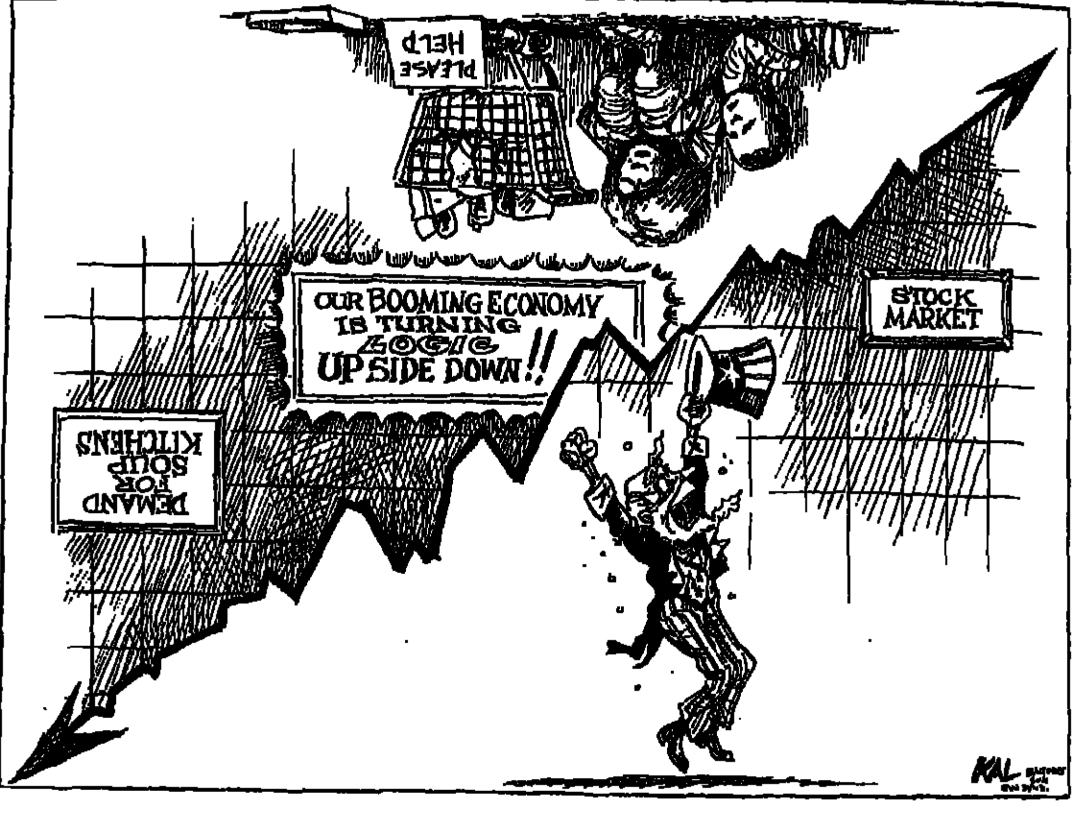
Last week those anxieties took clearer shape as Wall Street got another serious attack of the Asian jitters and international investors gravitated once again to the safety of the dollar. It isn't time for US investors or the administration to panic, but the economic golden age that has done so much to secure Bill Clinton's presidency could be approaching a critical point under the weight of cheap imports and the kind of strategic investment switches that have provoked the current strikes in the US automobile industry.

That anxiety underlies the intensity of the administration's recent efforts to secure Congressional approval for the plan to refinance and resecure the International Monetary Fund, a plan that currently languishes on Capitol Hill. Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, recently called the IMF "the only multilateral institution capable of inducing the reforms that will make recovery self-sustaining". But it is an indication of the divided state of US politics that the same view is no longer held in the Republican party. The IMF, once a linchpin of US global economic strategy under administrations of both parties, has become a weapon in the domestic partisan battle in Washington.

Nowhere is the change of stance more obvious than in the Republican party's attitude towards the economic woes of Russia, themselves intimately bound up with the Asian crisis. There was a time, not long ago, when aid to Russia in the form of further IMF loans would have been certain of a bipartisan majority. Today, though, many of the same politicians who 10 years ago saw themselves as post-communist Russia's best friends, and who welcomed Moscow's embrace of IMF disciplines, are refusing to endorse the new deal and are turning increasingly against the IMF itself.

The Republican leadership in Congress has adopted an increasingly critical tone and an unyielding stance towards the IMF, demanding that it should become a more pliant instrument of the right's peremptory view of the world. The US supplies a little more than 18 per cent of the IMF's funds, currently a total of $36 billion, which Clinton wishes to raise by 50 per cent.

On the face of it, the US ought to love the IMF. After all, the institution is to international financial relations what the United Nations is to international relations and Nato is to international military relations — the means by which the dominant world power, the US, secures international validation of and compliance with its own interests.



"The IMF is the instrument by which the US Treasury intervenes in developing countries," said the Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, one of the IMF's leading critics.

And yet, of the three international organisations mentioned above, Americans manifestly do not love either the IMF or the UN. In May the Senate voted overwhelmingly in favour of the expansion of Nato. Meanwhile the White House's attempts to get Congressional approval for the payment of $1 billion in dues to the UN are deadlocked. And its request for $18 billion in new funding for the IMF is bottled up too, because many Republicans see the financial body as the problem rather than the solution in solving the financial crises of a new world order in which many Americans assume that they give the orders and the rest of the world obeys.

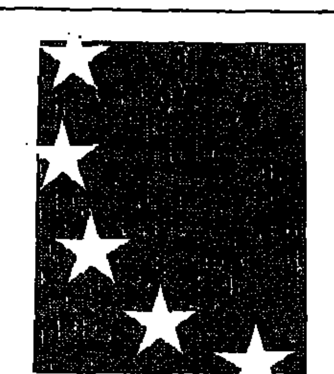
In both cases Congress explicitly tied any resolution of the funding proposals to the administration's support of internal reforms of both organisations, and the restriction of US funding to any UN or IMF programmes that involved support for abortion. The White House refused the condition. As a result there is deadlock on both issues, and no one in Washington believes that it can be resolved before the November mid-term Congressional election.

The Heritage Foundation, the influential rightwing think-tank, says Congress "must use its constitutionally mandated power of the purse to withhold all US funds unless its conditions of reform are met".

Part of the political problem is that even the administration defines the US's relationship with the IMF in strongly geopolitical terms. Berger recently said that Washington's objective in the IMF was "to leverage our power and influence, wherever possible, through the multiplier of collective action". Although the US provides only one-fifth of the IMF's funds, Berger said, "our contributions enable us to lend these critical institutions and put us in a position to accomplish goals that make a difference for all Americans."

The IMF exists to secure economic prosperity, democratic stability and international order, but in the long term. If, as part of the fulfilment of this long-term goal, the IMF appears to be using US money to prop up faraway regimes that preside over competitor economies, then it draws political fire from both the right and the left, especially in an election year.

Britain helps Europe score legal own-goal



Europe this week
Martin Walker

BRITAIN celebrated its closing weeks as President of the European Council with a legal victory in the European Court of Justice which provoked, thanks to the law of unintended consequences, an unholy mess in the European Union's budget. Just as Tony Blair was about to host Europe's other heads of government at the Cardiff summit this week, his government was accused of being responsible for a swath of cuts and suspensions of spending in the EU's budget for good works.

The Commission was forced to block (pending legal review) more than $600 million in payments for foreign aid projects, job creation schemes and the disabled, along with Welsh and Gaelic TV and radio services. Even Princess Diana's cherished campaign against landmines saw its $8 million grant suspended. At risk was what one commissioner called "the money that integrates Europe in a way that our people can see it at work".

The day after the story broke, when the total at risk was about $425 million, the Commission confirmed that the revised list of threatened projects had reached 504 million ecu, or $600 million. The biggest victim in this hit-list of Europe's good causes was the developing world. A total of $220 million for NGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid was under review in this year's EU budget, and spending plans for next year were in limbo.

"Many of these programmes are ones that I personally want to support, but I have to run the budget according to the law, and after this court ruling I cannot break the law," said the EU budget commissioner, Erki Liikanen. "This is a terrible dilemma for the Commission."

Initially claiming "a victory for the taxpayers" after winning their lawsuit against EU discretionary spending, British officials were rocked — but unrepentant — as they began to realise the political implications of what their legal triumph had done.

"The UK does not feel any great guilt for having initiated this legal action," said an official spokeswoman for the British mission in Brussels. "We are pleased that the court ruled in our favour, but we will also be pleased to look at any Commission proposal for resolving these issues."

And resolution came fast. The Commission, Council, British officials and parliament have been scrambling to put the more important of the threatened programmes on to a new legal basis. Complex legal procedures involving all three bodies, which can take years to enact, are being rammed through in a matter of weeks. The $260 million for the work of NGOs in the developing world should be restored and legal by the end of July. But the $98 million for the EU's human rights and democracy programmes will not be restored until the end of the year at the earliest. The United States government, a partner in many of these areas, was understandably furious at the bureaucratic mess.

The list of budget items suspended by Britain's legal "victory" contained some to make a Downing Street spin-doctor wince. On the very day that the World Cup opened, the EU had to suspend its $3.2 million budget on sport in Europe. And in the week that President Clinton and the United Nations held a conference on international co-operation in the war on drugs, the EU suspended its $1.5 budget for the anti-drugs campaign. The hit-list also includes items with serious implications for European foreign policy, such as the financial co-operation project for Turkey and $11.5 million in special aid to Bosnia.

The British court case that plunged Europe's budget into chaos began with prostitutes in Vienna and Bilbao at the height of the previous Conservative government's Eurosceptic period. A $325,000 grant from the EU social fund to rehabilitate the socially excluded was awarded by the Commission to social groups in the Austrian and Spanish cities to help the women. Britain blocked the payment and then brought a lawsuit in the European Court of Justice questioning the Commission's right to make such discretionary grants.

"This is not about the lack of British government priorities about the social exclusion budget, which we strongly support," said a British spokeswoman. "But taxpayers have to be sure that their money is being spent on a firm legal basis."

But the financing system under which the grants were authorised has been in constant use since 1976. Money was allocated under a budget line, which was then approved in general by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, and the Commission was left to authorise its use in detail. Over the years this became the system by which NGOs were funded to carry out Commission-approved projects in the developing world.

"Unless this crisis is resolved quickly, our British government's vaunted concern for international development could be very seriously undermined," said Phil Blumer, Oxfam's policy director, who saw 18 months of preparatory work and $4 million in immediate aid projects grind to a halt.

The EU's support for women's projects and its Aids campaign in the developing world were also on the target list, along with the budget for anti-racism programmes in Europe — even though this will be mandated by the Amsterdam treaty once it is fully ratified by the member states. The groups that represent Europe's 30 million disabled people and its 60 million pensioners were told to expect instant cuts with no guarantees that grants would be resumed in the future.

Most dramatic was the Commission's realisation that Europe's top officials, directors-general and division chiefs earning more than $160,000 a year could be held personally responsible for all the questionable payments they had authorised. They instantly scurried to stop cheques and stand down the computerised payments system.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Lawrence inquiry paints case in black and white

STEPHEN LAWRENCE was murdered in 1993 by a gang of young men at a bus stop in Eltham, South London, in an apparently motiveless attack. Five men were eventually charged with his murder, but three of them were acquitted and the charges against the other two never came to trial.

Such a story would not be particularly unusual except that Stephen Lawrence was black and his alleged assailants were white. Stephen's parents, who claim that their son's murder was racist but that the police made no serious effort to bring his killers to justice, have secured a public inquiry into the police investigation of the murder which has uncovered some disturbing aspects of the way the case was handled.

The inquiry has heard how an arrest was delayed because a superintendent with 30 years' service claimed he was "uncertain" of his powers of arrest.

Last week Stephen's mother, Doreen Lawrence, bluntly accused the police of racism during the murder investigation. She complained that the initial investigation had "gone bad because there was some link between the police and the defendants" and that she and her husband had "been treated as criminals, not victims".

The hearing has now received a setback because the alleged killers have challenged the summons which ordered them to give evidence to the inquiry. There will be a judicial hearing into their objections that, by giving evidence to the inquiry, they would be facing an "unfair and unlawful" trial for a murder of which three of them have already been acquitted.

The inquiry, convened under the 1996 Police Act, is charged with "inquiring into matters arising from the death of Stephen Lawrence in order to identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and the prosecution of racially motivated crimes." The questioning of the suspects was always expected to raise complex legal issues.

THOUSANDS of former Japanese prisoners of war were given qualified new hope by the Prime Minister when he promised a fresh legal review of whether Britain can claim £14,000 each in compensation for their wartime suffering.

Prisoners got £76 each under Britain's 1951 peace treaty with Japan. The Japanese, who maintain it is now too late to reopen that treaty, fear that any concession to Britain could trigger a claim for billions of pounds by China, where hundreds of thousands of civilians were slaughtered before and during the second world war.

ALTHOUGH Tony Blair's predecessor, John Major, set out to make the honours system "less haphazard", the Queen's Birthday Honours, published last weekend, seemed as haphazard as ever.

Why, it might be asked, should Geoff Hurst, who scored a hat-trick in England's 1996 World Cup final victory, have to wait until last weekend to receive a knighthood? Why should one school crossing warden, however worthy, be honoured as distinct from another? Why one nurse or doctor rather than another?

"Ordinary" folk can now nominate one another for honours, but the Government flatly refuses to name the people who sift through the thousands of nominations. It says it wants to prevent them from being lobbied.

Mr Blair was urged by some of his supporters to modernise this not-so-cool bit of Britannia by introducing a more open honours system. Others continued to insist that the whole bizarre system be scrapped altogether.

THE TRUSTEES of the Louise Woodward appeal fund, set up to pay for the defence of the young English au pair accused of murdering her eight-month-old American charge, Matthew Eappen, rejected allegations that Louise's mother, Susan, had defrauded the fund of £10,600.

The claim was made by Dan Sharp, whose wife, Elaine Whitfield Sharp, was recently sacked from the Woodwards' legal team. He alleged that Mrs Woodward had forged invoices to claim money to pay for accommodation at the Sharps' home in Massachusetts for which she had not, in fact, been charged.

In a guarded statement, the chairman of the trustees of the Cheshire fund, the Rev Ken Davey, said the fund's deed defined the beneficiaries as Louise, her mother and father, and relatives and dependants as determined by the trustees. "Any payments to these beneficiaries therefore come within the objectives of the trust fund."

Much of the fund, which at one point reached £280,000, has been spent during the trial and subsequent appeal, the result of which is still awaited. But there was a setback this week when Mrs Jean Jones, once one of Louise's staunchest supporters, said she had parted from the trust fund because Mrs Woodward seemed to regard the cash as her own.

THE Salvation Army, familiar the world over for its brass bands, bonnets and military style uniforms and ranks, is to embark on a root-and-branch review of what it does, and how it looks, after research found that the public had little awareness of what the movement — Britain's sixth biggest charity — actually does.

The army's new leader in Britain, Commissioner John Gowans, said that the revamp would almost certainly mean changes to the uniform, identified by the research as being at the root of the organisation's unwanted Victorian image. The "Sally Army" is the world's largest and most diverse provider of social welfare, and Commissioner Cowans said he wanted this to be more widely recognised.

Few people, he said, were aware of the army's work with the unemployed, its role in disaster relief, or its help for victims of domestic violence. "The image is stuck as that of a nice, quaint organisation — but not one at the cutting edge."



Patrick Nicholls, centre, after hearing he had been cleared by the Court of Appeal PHOTO: JAMES HORTA

Innocent – after 23 years in jail

Duncan Campbell

A MAN who spent 23 years in jail for a "murder" that never happened was cleared by the Court of Appeal last week. His case was described as one of the gravest miscarriages of justice.

Patrick Nicholls, aged 69, from Worthing in Sussex, blinked back tears in court as he listened to Lord Justice Roch express his "great regret" for his lost years in jail. He had been jailed for life in 1975 for the murder of Gladys Heath, aged 74, a family friend, and was only released in February this year, in anticipation of the ruling.

A packed court heard how the pathologists' evidence that had helped to convict Mr Nicholls was deeply flawed, and that Heath had almost certainly died of natural causes.

Lord Justice Roch, sitting with Mr Justice Bennett and Mr Justice Thomas, told him: "In allowing this appeal, we would wish to express this court's great regret that as a result of what has now been shown to be flawed pathological evidence the appellant was wrongly convicted and has spent such a very long time in jail."

The court said the jurors who had convicted him should feel no blame as they had acted according to the evidence presented. Mr Nicholls could now receive about £500,000 in compensation.

The court heard that a report last year by Professor John Crane, the Northern Ireland state pathologist, had found "no evidence" to back the original prosecution case that Heath had been suffocated by Mr Nicholls during a robbery at her home.

Michael Mansfield QC told the court that Prof Crane had called the reports of his predecessors, the late Dr Hugh Johnson and the late Professor James Cameron, "inadequate, inappropriate and misleading". The prosecution had also failed to inform the defence at the time of the trial that one of the pathologists had suggested that Heath had died from natural causes.

A fellow prisoner who claimed that Mr Nicholls had confessed while awaiting trial had later recanted.

"They've stolen a third of my life" said Mr Nicholls, who now walks with a stick following a stroke and the onset of arthritis. "It's been a long haul, a long fight, but I always knew I would get out."

He said that "being obstinate and being innocent" had kept him going. "You can always tell an innocent man in prison; there's an aura round them, something in the body language. We give each other strength," he said.

Mr Nicholls could have been paroled 10 years ago if he had admitted his guilt, but refused.

Witnesses to get protection

Alan Travis

NEW restrictions on the reporting of trials, the introduction of one-way screens in courtrooms and panic alarms are among measures announced last week by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to tackle growing concern about witness intimidation.

A Home Office report puts forward 78 separate recommendations to give greater protection to victims in rape and serious sexual offence trials, to witnesses who are vulnerable — such as those with learning difficulties — and to deal with intimidation.

The package to be endorsed by Mr Straw will confirm that it is to be made illegal for a defendant in a rape trial personally to cross-examine his alleged victim. But the report also reveals that this ban will be extended to all violent crime and to cruelty and neglect trials involving child witnesses.

Police corruption growing

SERIOUS corruption in the police service is on the increase, the Police Complaints Authority said last week, *writes Duncan Campbell*.

The warning followed a disclosure in the Guardian of the Metropolitan police's anti-corruption drive against criminal officers, some of whom are claimed to have been involved on the fringes of contract killings and in setting up robberies and drug deals.

Peter Moorhouse, chairman of the PCA, told the home affairs committee on police disciplinary and complaints procedures that, in terms of corruption, "there is no doubt we are on an upward cycle".

The PCA said it was committed to backing any anti-corruption branch officers who faced intimidation from colleagues.

The Guardian reported that one officer investigating corruption had had to be withdrawn from the inquiry because of intimidation.

It is understood that between 20 and 40 Metropolitan police officers could eventually face charges. There are fears that corrupt officers might embark on a "dirty tricks" campaign against investigating officers. A number of "supergrass" officers are assisting the police by giving evidence against their colleagues.

The possibility of immunity for those giving evidence is likely to be discussed with the Crown Prosecution Service.

A number of detectives are understood to be considering whether to co-operate with the inquiry in exchange either for immunity or for a much shorter sentence than they would otherwise receive. Police corruption is treated very seriously in the courts and officers convicted of abusing their powers would be likely to face heavy sentences. A former Met officer, Ronald Palumbo, who was jailed last year for drugs offences, received an 11-year sentence.

Some Metropolitan police officers have complained that the investigation is bad for morale in that it highlights the activities of only a very small number of officers.

Others in the service have suggested that the top brass at Scotland Yard are seeking to divert attention from inevitable bad publicity over the force's handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry by highlighting the campaign against corruption.

In Brief

RESEARCHERS into multiple sclerosis have discovered a disturbing link with Scottish ancestry. A high incidence of MS is found in those places where expatriate Scots tend to cluster, such as the south island of New Zealand, south Australia and the northern states of the US.

FIGURES from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service show students are turning away from courses in the caring professions and flocking to those with prospects of more lucrative jobs in marketing and computer software.

EDINBURGH, Leicester and Bristol have been chosen for trials to charge motorists to drive into city centres, in an attempt to cut congestion. If the pilot schemes are successful they will be introduced nationally.

A FULL resumption of British beef exports is a step closer after the European Commission in Brussels ruled that meat from cattle born after August 1, 1996, was safe from BSE and fit to be sold abroad.

TIPS, bonuses and commissions may be included in the calculation of the minimum wage, it emerged as the TUC expressed alarm at reports that the Chancellor is battling to cut the recommended youth rate of £3.20 and extend it to workers in their early 20s.

THE UK's first bi-colour coin, with a value of £2, has been launched and will be phased in over the next few months.

THE PRISON Service is to pay £20,000 to a former prisoner, Annette Walker, who was shackled while she was in the process of giving birth, leading to a change in the rules for chaining female offenders.

THE MINISTRY of Defence is facing a £6.6 million compensation bill after an Appeal Court ruling, for contaminating land with radioactive materials from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston.

HUNDREDS of passengers travelled on a British Airways flight from London Heathrow to Montreal this month unaware that it was carrying processed radioactive uranium. BA said the cargo had been carried with "strict adherence to international regulations".

GUARDIAN writer Jonathan Steele was awarded the 1998 James Cameron memorial prize "in recognition of the sustained quality of his foreign reporting and analysis".

REG SMYTHE, the creator of the Andy Capp cartoon strip, has died at the age of 81.

Blunkett halts drift towards greater selection by schools

John Carvel

A NEW schools regime to defend the principle of comprehensive state education and halt the drift toward a partially selective system was announced last week by the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett.

From September 2000 it will be unlawful for schools to introduce any additional selection on grounds of general academic ability.

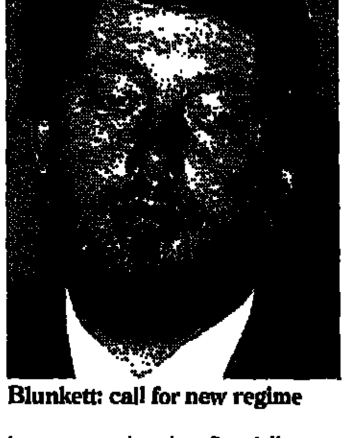
They will be allowed to bring in banding schemes to secure a genuinely comprehensive intake by testing applicants and choosing a balanced mix from all ranges of ability. But they will not be able to change their admissions procedures to admit more of the cleverest pupils.

Mr Blunkett did not go all the way to fulfilling his promise to the 1995 Labour conference when he said: "Read my lips: No selection by examination or interview."

Secondary schools using the freedom given by Conservative ministers to select up to 15 per cent of their pupils may continue to do so unless challenged by their education authority or local parents.

Adjudicators appointed to handle these challenges will follow regulations modelled on Mr Blunkett's statement: "We do not believe that partial selection based on academic ability is in the best interests of parents, children and other schools."

He published interim guidance to cover admissions in September 1999 before the statutory regulations come into effect. It said selection must never be used to decide entry into state primaries. Specialist secondary schools could choose up to 10 per cent of their pupils according to their aptitude for particular subjects, such as music or technology, but this should not be used for selection by general academic ability.



Blunkett: call for new regime

"Schools or admission authorities should not interview parents as any part of the application or admissions process. Church schools may reasonably carry out interviews, but only to assess religious or denominational commitment."

The document gave no further details about the future of the 160 state grammar schools that are to be allowed to continue to be fully selective unless local parents decide otherwise by ballot.

The Audit Commission has estimated that one in five parents fail to get their children into their preferred secondary school.

Earlier the Office for Standards in Education said that the gap between the best and worst state secondary schools had widened over recent years as Conservative ministers tried to create a competitive education market and put pressure on weaker establishments.

"The principle of parental choice has been frustrated because there have not been enough good schools, and such schools have not been able, for the most part, to expand very greatly," it concluded after inspecting half a million lessons and analysing the performance of 3,500 secondaries in England.

Although standards rose overall, the better schools improved faster than their weaker rivals. In 1992 the performance gap between the top 10 per cent and bottom 10 per cent of secondary schools was worth 30.4 points at GCSE — equivalent to nearly four additional passes per pupil at the top A grade. By 1996 that gap increased to 32 points.

● Teachers' holidays should be cut from 13 weeks a year to eight in return for a pay rise of as much as 20 per cent, local authority leaders told the Government last week.

The Local Government Association called on the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, for an extra £6 billion to finance fundamental changes which they claim will create a modernised teaching profession. They asked him to make teachers a special case in the spending review of government departments, which is expected to reach its conclusions in July.

But the authorities' readiness to cut holidays — widely regarded as teachers' one remaining perk — will infuriate the unions.

Hope for asthma cure

Sarah Boseley

A VACCINE which may prevent some forms of asthma in children could be ready for trials within three years, scientists reported last week.

They have identified a virus called RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) which can cause inflammation in the lungs.

Although air pollution, house dust mites and other common allergens are thought to make asthma worse, some experts believe that RSV might be the underlying cause in about a third of all sufferers.

The work done by Peter Openshaw, of Imperial College School of Medicine, and colleagues is recorded in the Journal of Experimental Medicine. They report that they have identified the active part of a substance the virus produces, called the G protein.

According to an article in the New Scientist magazine, it is thought that the G protein triggers a huge influx of inflammatory cells into the lungs of infected animals which throws the immune system off balance, switching it into the mode for fighting infections. Clogging mucus is produced, and the coughs and sneezes it provokes in the asthma sufferer may help the virus spread.

Dr Openshaw's colleagues at the National Institutes of Health near Washington DC hope to be able to start a trial in children, using live modified vaccines with altered G proteins, within three years.

Tumim leaves Oxford college

Nick Hopkins

AFTER eight years battling with the Government over the state of the nation's jails, Sir Stephen Tumim was looking forward to life in the still waters of academia.

The former Chief Inspector of Prisons, wearied by the rough and tumble, relished his appointment two years ago as the principal of Oxford university's prestigious and ancient St Edmund Hall.

But if Sir Stephen thought his dust-ups with political heavyweights such as Michael Howard and Kenneth Clarke had prepared him for anything, he was sadly mistaken.

Last week Sir Stephen resigned, the victim, his supporters claim, of a whispering campaign by dons at St Edmund, who were horrified by the brash style which made him a thorn in the side of successive home secretaries.

There had been grumbling about him from the moment he arrived at St Edmund — known as Teddy Hall. Some dons argued that Sir Stephen was not "one of us". Although an Oxford graduate he had not studied at St Edmund, the university's only surviving medieval hall.

Their suspicions that Sir Stephen, never a stickler for tradition, might not be the right sort were quickly borne out. Marching around the hall's tiny 13th century quadrangle in his colourful bow ties, Sir Stephen quickly became popular with students.

He took their side in their disputes with the dons and seemed to prefer their company.

"The students think he's great because he makes an effort to get to know us, whereas none of the other dons bother because they are too embroiled in their studies," said one undergraduate.

Sir Stephen was also in favour of modernising St Edmund, and suggested that more pupils from state schools should be encouraged to join.

Disquiet among the 30 dons in the senior common room was also felt by another colourful character in the college, who has been put out by Sir Stephen's abrupt manner. According to students, Geoffrey Bourne-Taylor, the bursar at Teddy Hall since 1988, found Sir Stephen too much of an eccentric.

Mr Bourne-Taylor became the focal point for the dons' resentment. He apparently organised meetings of the dons, rallying them to take the unheard-of step of demanding Sir Stephen's resignation.

Believing his position to be untenable, Sir Stephen agreed to leave, but, because there were no grounds for dismissal, he was awarded what is believed to be a six-figure severance sum. He will stay on until the end of the academic year.

The students have been appalled by Sir Stephen's treatment. "He has been a breath of fresh air for Teddy Hall," said one. "He's the only one that we all got along with, and the dons should have learnt from him rather than trying to kick him out."



Assets sale stuns backbench MPs

Larry Elliott
and Ewen MacAskill

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, stunned Labour backbenchers last week when he announced privatisations and asset sales worth £4 billion a year for three years to help fund higher spending on Britain's crumbling infrastructure.

In a radical overhaul of the Government's finances, Mr Brown announced the partial sale of air traffic control, the Tote, the Royal Mint, and the Commonwealth Development Corporation as part of a three-year blueprint for spending until the next election.

Unlike the Conservatives, Mr Brown intends to use the proceeds of the sell-offs to boost the public sector, but his announcement was met with derisory laughter from Opposition backbenchers who chanted "privatisation" as the plans were outlined.

The Chancellor's advisers denied that the proposals amounted to privatisation, and said the policy was a partnership of the public and private sectors, with the Government retaining 49 per cent plus a golden share.

Other assets lined up for sale are a tranche of outstanding student loans, Belfast port, motorway service stations such as Newport Pagnell and Watford Gap, and a host of buildings and land held by departments, such as food bunkers built for the cold war and Ministry of Defence cottages on Salisbury Plain.

Local authorities are expected to raise £2.75 billion a year from property sales so that resources can be recycled into extra spending on schools, hospitals, housing and transport.

Unveiling the Government's Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report, Mr Brown told MPs that "in place of short-termism and the neglect of public services, we have a new long-term direction for the renewal of our public services and our country."

He said gross public investment would increase from £21 billion this financial year to £29 billion in 2001/02 but departments would have to give the Treasury precise details of how they intended to spend the extra money.

Once depreciation is taken into account, investment spending by the Government has fallen to just 0.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in recent years. Mr Brown said he planned almost to double this figure to 1.5 per cent over the next three years.

However, he said that under the new system for the state's finances, the Treasury would keep a tight rein on Whitehall's spending on salaries and running costs.

Following a two-year freeze, this will rise by 2.25 per cent in each of the next three years, but there will be higher increases for health and education when Mr Brown gives the departmental details of his plans in next month's Comprehensive Spending Review.

Although the average increase in current spending over the entire Parliament is lower than under John Major's 1992/97 administration — and may possibly lead to conflict with the public sector unions — Mr Brown defended his approach.

"It is only because we have set this tough framework, based on strict control of current spending, a prudent debt-to-GDP ratio and a fiscal tightening, that it is possible to take the action necessary to reverse the chronic under-investment in health, education, transport and housing infrastructure, and to re-equip Britain as a modern nation."

Sceptical Labour MPs accused Mr Brown of dodging the obvious route of raising taxes to fund investment and instead opting for a sale of assets. Labour leftwingers questioned how councils could meet the targets for the sale of their assets set by Mr Brown, £2.75 billion a year. One feared that town halls, community halls and schools would have to be sold off and leased back.

Alan Simpson, chairman of the Campaign Group, said: "Thatcher did this to local government throughout the eighties and was denounced for selling off the family silver." Many local authorities were now asset-poor.

The shadow chancellor, Francis Maude, said the Tories would help the Government in its bid to privatise some of its assets and to cut debt but he mocked Mr Brown for his conversion to privatisation.

Scoutmaster declares passion for Prudence

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

GORDON BROWN announced his strategy for the foreseeable future last week. The Chancellor sounds increasingly like a stern Scottish scoutmaster. You feel that he ought to come to the House in khaki shorts with a woggle round his neck.

Baden-Powell would have been proud of him. He believes, he told us, in the manner of one laying down the regulations for a particularly arduous camping trip to the Cairngorms, in "rigorous discipline". In Mr Brown's world there are "golden rules" that must be observed at all times.

Unjustified subsidies will be "rooted out". "Toughness", "stability" and "responsibility" are our watchwords. There will be no nonsense, he said, about "throwing money at our problems".

"Please, sir, Mr Broon, sir, ah'm hungry. Canna buy maself a Snickers bar?"

"There will no throwing money at the problem here, boy. Wait for your boiled pemmican with freeze-dried neeps."

Yet this is a scoutmaster with a secret. Behind that rigid carapace of stability and discipline, there beats a heart that throbs and races like a butterfly's wings.

For Mr Brown is in love, with somebody called Prudence. Try as he might, he could not help mentioning her name. He called for "Prudence in public finances", "Prudence in debt-GDP ratio". He attacked the Tories for all the "years which ended without Prudence". I counted 11 mentions of her name in his opening statements alone.

Later he described, touchingly, how "public investment and Prudence can go hand in hand". Was it my imagination, or did he not feel just the faintest pang of jealousy against lucky old Public Investment, sauntering down the high street with Prudence on his arm?

The Chancellor gathered himself together. His iron self-discipline served him well when the Tories deemed it extremely funny. They began laughing when he announced his list of new privatisations, which began with air traffic control. Labour MPs sat in glum silence.

For it was a junior minister, Andrew Smith, who denied this during the election campaign, declaring that "our air is not for sale", which is typical of the silly things people say during election campaigns. You might as well stop M&S selling swimming costumes on the grounds that "our water is not for sale".

Francis Maude, the new shadow Chancellor, replied. Mr Maude is very clever, but entirely lacking in any sense of drama. He had one good joke: "Goodbye, Iron Chancellor — may he rust in peace," but even that fell flat.

Doctors called to account

Sarah Boseley

A RADICAL drive to open up hospitals to the scrutiny of patients was announced by the Government last week in a bid to prevent appalling tragedies such as the unnecessary deaths of the Bristol heart babies from ever happening again.

The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, said hospitals must be accountable to patients, who have a right to know their chances and their children's chances of death or damage at a surgeon's hands.

In a comprehensive response to the Bristol tragedies, he announced a series of measures, some of which will take effect as early as this autumn. They are designed to remove the mystique surrounding doctors that suggests that they always know best — and replace it with solid information and statistics about successes and failures. Only then will the patient be able to make realistic judgments about where and how to accept treatment.

"Providing this information, so patients know the risks, is a prerequisite for patients to exercise their common law right to give informed consent," he said. "The appalling tragedy at Bristol cannot be allowed to happen again. Standards matter to doctors. They matter to the Government. Most importantly, they matter to patients. We are determined to raise standards throughout the NHS to those of the best."

Doctors and their professional bodies — the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council and the medical Royal Colleges — have accepted that the move towards greater public accountability is for the best and inevitable.

They have been opposed to league tables of surgeons, fearing that they will discourage treatment of high-risk patients.

The Bristol case, and the cancer screening failures at Exeter and Kent and Canterbury, damaged public confidence. Restoring confidence needed internal hospital scrutiny to be "supplemented by open and external review".

Doctors also needed the data to judge performance.

Other measures he announced were:

- A national performance framework focusing on the quality, not just the expense, of NHS services.
- "Sophisticated measures of clinical quality on a specialty-by-specialty and hospital-by-hospital basis". These will vary. In heart operations they will be death rates but in hip replacements they will measure the length of time before the artificial joint needs replacing.
- By the end of this year, criteria specified for judging the success of each hospital's performance in heart operations. Then monitoring, with details being published.
- Doctors required to take part in routine inquiries into deaths after surgery, maternal deaths, stillbirths and infant deaths, and suicides. Last year in one region a third did not take part in inquiries into deaths after operations.
- From next year, all hospital doctors will be required to put their results into an audit of their speciality organised by their Royal College.
- All doctors will have to share their results, in confidence, with the medical director of their trust and visiting teams of doctors.

Mr Dobson said: "These important changes will help patients by raising standards across the NHS."

Cannabis to be given clinical trials

A PIONEERING biotechnology company has been granted two Home Office licences to build a high security greenhouse for cultivating cannabis plants and carry out the first large-scale clinical trials of the drug, *writes Owen Bowcott.*

The decision signals government recognition of the growing volume of research into medical uses of cannabis as a pain reliever, appetite stimulant and anti-nausea treatment. The banned substance is also known to help sufferers of glaucoma.

GW Pharmaceuticals, established by Geoffrey Guy, has spent £4 million leasing the greenhouse which it will fill with specialist strains of *Cannabis sativa* bought from a Dutch horticultural firm. The site is surrounded by a high, razor-wire perimeter fence, CCTV cameras and is under 24-hour guard. Its location is — so far — a well-kept secret.

Dr Guy, who also set up Ethical Holdings plc and the biotechnology company Phytopharm Ltd, specialises in developing herbal treatments for chronic conditions such as asthma, eczema and hormone replacement therapies. His companies have previously investigated exploiting African herbs for the treatment of diabetes, and spider venom from Russia for curing nervous disorders.

The first tests will be with those suffering muscle spasms due to multiple sclerosis, and patients with severe spine injuries.

In Britain cannabis still accounts for 85 per cent of drug arrests.

English football's rotten core

IF THE English fans causing trouble in France this week were only drunken louts, it would be much easier. If, as the UK sports minister asserted, they were just "drunken, brain-dead louts", it would be easier still. But although alcohol plays an important role, there are more complicated and unattractive elements too. Speaking in the wake of 12 hours of seemingly senseless vandalism in Marseille, the senior English police intelligence officer sent to help the French spoke of "orchestrated violence" — specific individuals seeking out supporters in bars and "orchestrating the trouble". The president of the world football body Fifa spoke of people seeking to use the World Cup as a stage. Once again football is telling the English — for this is an English rather than a British problem — some unpalatable truths. Violence, racism and xenophobia have still not been eliminated from the English psyche. It may infect only a small minority, but the infection's potential for harm is huge.

The Prime Minister was right to be robust in his condemnation. There can be no excuses for the violence. The vandals may only have been a minority of the 10,000 English fans who travelled to France for Monday's game, but they remained a sizeable minority: at least 400. Moreover it was not mindless violence. National Criminal Intelligence Service reports have identified a hard core of rightwingers who have decided to switch their attention from attending English games at home to international games. Hence the disruption in Rome during last year's game against Italy and the violence in Dublin in 1995, which forced the Irish international match to be abandoned. Sir Brian Hayes, security adviser to the Football Association and former senior officer with the Metropolitan police, is right when he says the violence has "very little to do with football", yet football provides the drunken minority who are easily manipulated and manoeuvred by the core orchestrators.

But how, after the months of international talks between police and football officials, could violence still break out? Intelligence officers pointed to the numbers: 400 rioters requires 4,000 police to contain them. English police advisers politely paid tribute to the French police, but British football reporters tell a different story: a French police service that failed to snuff out early trouble, failed to keep the English separated from the Tunisians and French, and failed to shut off areas.

The start of the trouble coincided last Sunday with the arrival of a double-decker bus, sponsored by the Sun newspaper, playing the national anthem and handing out bowler hats. Symbolically, in Clockwork Orange, Stanley Kubrick's examination of violence as a form of self-expression, the working-class lads wore bowlers. This is not to suggest the bowlers caused the trouble, but it is worth remembering that Kubrick withdrew his film in Britain because of his fear of it fuelling further violence.

There is nothing new in the links between far right groups and violence. It goes back more than 60 years to when Oswald Mosley, the British fascist, directed it. One reason it is no longer politically directed is because of the young's antipathy towards politics. Football, which generates patriotic feelings and antagonism towards foreign opponents, is a fertile field for current advocates. Mein Kampf noted that you only need a few to run a rally: just get a few to start a fight and the rest join in.

Asia faces meltdown

THE WHOLE of East Asia will suffer the reverberations of last week's seismic shock in Japan when the second largest economy in the world sank into its first recession for nearly a quarter of a century. According to the Economic Planning Agency in Tokyo the economy contracted by 1.3 per cent in the three months to March, following a reduction of 0.4 per cent the previous quarter. Two successive quarterly falls are normally classified as a recession. It is difficult to believe that barely seven years ago the Japanese economy looked impregnable while the United States was losing confidence in its ability to stay at the forefront of technology-led growth. News and business magazines in the US were full of articles bemoaning the country's misfortunes and how Japan had stolen a lead in key areas. This diagnosis appeared to be confirmed by economic statistics. In the seven years to 1991, Japan's economy grew by an average of 4.5 per cent a year — beating the US every year — while America recorded average growth of 2.4 per cent. In 1991 the US economy contracted by 1 per cent while Japan was zooming ahead at nearly 4 per cent — the reverse of today's image.

Then something happened. The US economy was suddenly carried aloft by the information technology revolution which, somewhat to its own surprise, it now completely dominates. But while the US exploited sunrise industries, Japan turned into the land of the sinking sun. The huge inflation of share and property prices, predictably, went into reverse, dragging down with it the banking system and exposing endemic inefficiencies in the non-manufacturing areas of the economy. Japan's leading manufacturers are still highly competitive thanks to the falling yen, but the collapse of markets in the rest of Asia has hit them badly (exports were down 3.8 per cent in the last quarter). The great fear now is that if the yen, which has dropped in value by over 40 per cent against the dollar since its 1995 high, carries on falling then it will trigger a fresh round of beggar-my-neighbour devaluations among other countries in the region including, most worryingly, China.

Consumers in Japan are so unused to the spectre of growing unemployment, bankruptcies and recession that they are very reluctant to spend more of their huge savings. There is no guarantee that the fruits of the next reflationary package won't simply be added to savings, as happened to previous ones. Since interest rates are so low as to be almost non-existent there is hardly any role for conventional monetary policy unless it be the unorthodox recipe recommended by the US professors Milton Freedman and Paul Krugman — a sustained dose of rising inflation. If that doesn't work then maybe the Emperor should be called in to urge everyone to spend, spend, spend in the national — and international — interest. For, make no mistake, if Japan gets sucked into a deflationary spiral it will affect not just Asia but, in a globalised economy, the rest of the world.

Nigeria must start afresh

NIGERIA has taken the first tentative step down the Indonesian road under its new regime — after an unpromising start. General Abdulsalam Abubakar was favourably compared with the late General Sani Abacha after he took over: he was discreet, a professional, and with no known political ambitions. But it is not a question about character: it is whether he is prepared to take convincing action to mark a break with repression.

The few hundred demonstrators who risked taking to the streets in Lagos last week, to be met by teargas, were defying the official mourning period declared for Abacha, which was conveniently extended to a month. Gen Abubakar even warned Nigeria's World Cup team not to depress the nation by a "dismal" result. (Fortunately they won their first match.) His inaugural speech gave no hint that the military was prepared to yield significant power. Instead he relied on the empty formula of Abacha's already discredited "transition". He was also completely silent on human rights.

This week came the first signal of change, with the order for the release of nine leading political prisoners, including the former ruler General Obasanjo. It is not clear how far foreign pressure — including a telephone plea from President Clinton — played a part.

Gen Abubakar is not a closet supporter of unfettered democracy, but he must now be hoping to buy time to build a more rational structure, defuse internal opposition and attract foreign sympathy.

The releases, it was made clear, were made in the hope that "the freed people would reciprocate . . . by co-operating with the government". That seems unlikely if the Abacha plan is kept and there is only one candidate — his successor — for elections on August 1. Pressure will also be stepped up for the release of Moshood Abiola, who should have won the last real elections five years ago. The prospect of Abachaism without Abacha may now be diminishing, and it is reasonable for the outside world to pause and see what happens next. Gen Abubakar cannot stand still: as in Indonesia, once change is permitted it develops a dynamic of its own.

Australia's populist political earthquake

Clive Hamilton

IT WOULD be a mistake to characterise the astonishing electoral success of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party in Queensland as the rise of rightwing extremism in the mould of France's National Front or Germany's neo-Nazis.

By capturing 23 per cent of the vote in Australia's most conservative state, Hanson's party has tapped into deep reservoirs of fear, alienation and economic distress.

As a working-class fish-and-chip shop owner, Hanson has roots that go deep into the psyche of the dispossessed, and she has the ability to reflect the feelings of the marginalised masses. For Hanson's supporters have been cut adrift by the scouring social changes that have swept through Australia in the past 15 years and by governments that have pooh-poohed their concerns as little more than reactionary spasms.

While the conservative parties seem to have suffered a grave setback in Queensland, Hanson's success is in truth a shocking indictment of the Australian left. The Labor party allowed itself to be bullied into submission throughout the Hawke-Keating period. In the absence of coherent alternatives, and lured by ministries and the opportunity to play at the margins, the party's left capitulated. Now the revolt against "economic rationalism" has finally burst through from the right and in its wake have come some deeply unpleasant demands related to Aboriginal welfare, immigration and guns.

Much of the disquiet that has accumulated since the early 1980s — when Labor began its 13 years of uninterrupted rule — was focused on Paul Keating, especially when he was elevated to prime minister in 1991. He was the moving force behind hardline economic liberalisation throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the foremost advocate of Australia as an "Asian nation". His arrogant dismissal of popular unease, and his barely concealed message of "Trust us, we know what's good for you", earned him widespread hostility from those locked out of the globalised society. Although the present prime minister, John Howard, has taken up Keating's policies with redoubled vigour, it is no exaggeration to say that Paul's legacy is Pauline.

Many supporters of Hanson have been traumatised by social and economic change over the past two decades. But instead of being congratulated for their forbearance they have been dismissed for their unwillingness to embrace the brave new world of free trade and Asian integration. Hanson has become the lightning rod for their resentment.

Unquestionably the most disturbing aspect of the rise of Hansonism has been the surfacing in some segments of Australian society of a virulent hostility towards Aboriginal people. Many Australians have been deeply shocked by this, and rightly so. Hanson has tapped into a mother lode of hatred for Aboriginal people that runs through the history of white settlement.

On taking office the Howard government mounted a cynical and sustained campaign to discredit the institutions of Aboriginal welfare and the processes of self-determination and reconciliation, culminating in Howard's shameful refusal to apologise on behalf of the nation for the policies of forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents. The prime minister invited the outpouring of racial hatred through the calculated persecution of the "Aboriginal industry" and his attacks on the "black arm-band view" of Australian history.

It is a puzzling feature of human history that the oppressed often turn, not on their oppressors, but on the more oppressed. Rather than targeting the real perpetrators of their discontent — the corporations, the currency speculators and the apologists for globalisation — some of Hanson's supporters, like poor whites in the United States' Deep South, have turned on those even more powerless and marginalised than themselves.

The response must confront the real concerns that lie at its root. To dismiss Hanson's supporters as "rednecks", and Hanson herself as the "Oxley-moron", is to avoid admitting that her success springs from real pain in the community.

One of the more ominous manifestations of the rise of Hanson has been the increased prevalence of racist incidents on the streets, especially in Queensland. But it would be facile to dismiss Hansonism and its attitudes to immigration as an antipodean manifestation of white supremacism. In some parts of Australia new and sudden concentrations of immigrants from Asia have required considerable cultural adjustment on the part of established communities. This is always a difficult and stressful process, especially when communities are beset by economic insecurity.

PAULINE HANSON herself is beguiling. Beneath the halting speech, grating accent and naivety over policy she is determined and politically ruthless, and has been clever enough to surround herself with media-savvy advisers. Among the slick, grey-suited politicians, Hanson's lack of education and ordinariness stand out. The greatest threat to Hanson's political fortune may well be the corruption of her political innocence.

Hanson also attracts powerful emotional responses. Men hug her, women weep and children seek her autograph. The Canberra establishment hopes that the triumph of emotion over reason will turn into disillusionment once One Nation is confronted with the hard decisions of parliamentary life.

But the fear, insecurity and alienation of the marginal people are real, and so is their willingness to trust their fate to a leader who speaks directly to them. The conditions that have given rise to their vulnerability remain and will probably worsen. Moreover it has become crushingly apparent that the mainstream parties simply have no answers. Unless they or others come up with some believable solutions, then Australia is in for a very rough ride, for Hansonism is here to stay.

Clive Hamilton is executive director of the Australia Institute, a Canberra think-tank

Putting the dictators in the dock

Some of the most evil leaders whose corruption and depravity have ravished and impoverished their nations go unpunished. Now that a global forum to bring them to justice is in sight, will it work? **Ian Black** reports

IN THE imposing Rome headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, built by Mussolini as his Ministry for African Affairs, officials from all 185 members of the United Nations gathered this week to negotiate what should be the most significant international human rights treaty the post-cold war world will see.

Half a century after the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals dispatched the wartime leaders of Nazi Germany and Japan to the gallows, the officials will be trying to hammer out agreement on a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) to ensure that other perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity do not go unpunished.

If the diplomats and lawyers meeting in Rome succeed, then a future Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet, Idi Amin, Radovan Karadzic or Saddam Hussein might well think twice about whether they could get away with it before committing atrocities.

It would certainly be a fitting achievement in the year that marks the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. "We have few weapons in our work to promote the rule of law and fight impunity," says Mary Robinson, the former Irish president who is now UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. "This court will tell the worst violators that they can run but they can't hide. There will be a day of reckoning."

Brave words. But the Rome talks, due to last five weeks, face formidable difficulties that reflect the fractured lines of power in a world where anything that dilutes precious national sovereignty is looked upon with deep suspicion. Lobbyists such as Amnesty International are now warning that a weak court could be worse than no court at all.

Ideas for setting up a permanent ICC came and went in the long years of the cold war. But it was only in its messy aftermath, in the early 1990s, with the break-up of Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda that it became a matter of urgency: ad hoc tribunals for both those bloody conflicts limp along, under-funded and overworked, and with lamentably few convictions.

Now something much more solid is needed. As Canada's foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, pointed out during preparatory talks in New York: "The traditional tools and institutions of international diplomacy were not designed to respond to this form of intra-state conflict."

Until recently things had been going well, though mostly behind closed doors as governments did silent battle over how far they were prepared to go to create what human rights activists insist must be a just, fair and effective court. Britain, strategically placed as member of the UN security council, the European Union, Nato and the G8, had won rare praise for its principled stand — a reflection of the UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's much vaunted, and taunted, commitment to an ethical foreign policy.

"Justice", argues the recent British Foreign Office report on human rights, "is a pre-condition for reconciliation. A society cannot recover from the horrors of war or acts such as genocide if those who have committed atrocities are allowed to remain free."

Yet as the conference deadline approached, signs were multiplying that the court project is in trouble. This is not just a question of unimportant details. At the last count some 1,700 phrases remained in the square brackets that negotiators insert in texts for the final battle down to the wire. "I don't want to paint too bleak a picture," says Mona Rishmawi of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. "But it's not an easy negotiation and it's not looking good. Yet it should be possible to succeed."

Many questions are still on the table in Rome, but the key one is about the independence of the key figure, the court's prosecutor who, purists such as Canada and Sweden say, must have the power to start investigations on his or her own initiative, based on information from any source, and subject only to judicial scrutiny.

A compromise version of this — likely to win wide support — is being pushed by Germany and Argentina. Under this, the prosecutor could begin investigations without referral to states, but would need authorisation from a pre-trial chamber. This would ensure the independence of the ICC and avoid politically motivated or frivolous investigations — what one expert calls the "nutcase factor".

Another key, and related question — highly sensitive for those who resent the dominance of the nuclear-armed Big Five nations in world affairs — is about the prosecutor's relationship with the UN security council. The United States, Russia, China and France all say, with weary predictability, that the court can only be "triggered" if the council first refers a matter to it.

Some also want governments of individual states — including, possibly, the one where the crime took place — to give consent before a prosecution may go forward. This could create the absurd situation, for example, in which Iraq's permission would be necessary to bring a case against Saddam Hussein.

For frustrated UN officials, embarrassed at the gap between the theory and practice of international humanitarian law, these are all concrete issues. "At the moment you have a situation where, if you kill 100,000 people, you're more likely to get off than if you kill one," complains one diplomat.

On the central issue many governments argue that a prosecutor with too much independence would be too political. Non-governmental organisations counter that all governments — and the UN security council — are themselves inherently political and that the purpose of a truly independent court would be to circumvent the inevitable constraints of diplomatic and economic relations.

In some of this Britain is the honourable exception. Mr Cook and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, are given credit for their enthusiastic support for the ICC, but recent Cabinet discussions have revealed opposition from the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence, apparently worried about the potential exposure of British troops (in the blue helmets of UN peacekeepers) facing trouble in far-flung parts.

President Clinton is said to have been "personally" supportive, but elsewhere in Washington the mood is negative. Officials there see the ICC as a last resort when national systems have collapsed.

Senator Jesse Helms, the fire-breathing conservative Republican from North Carolina, warned recently that the court would be "dead on arrival" at his foreign relations committee if the US did not have the power of veto over anything to do with the security council. And nothing can persuade the US military, still traumatised by the Somalia fiasco, to accept the notion that its personnel might have to face justice in a non-American court.

Extraordinary ideas have been put forward to weaken the power of the court. One is that the prosecutor should publicise any decision to start an investigation, or delay any ICC case to allow a state to begin its own. "If that happens," says Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch, "you can imagine that a suspect will be getting rid of his blood-soiled clothes and the evidence pretty quickly."

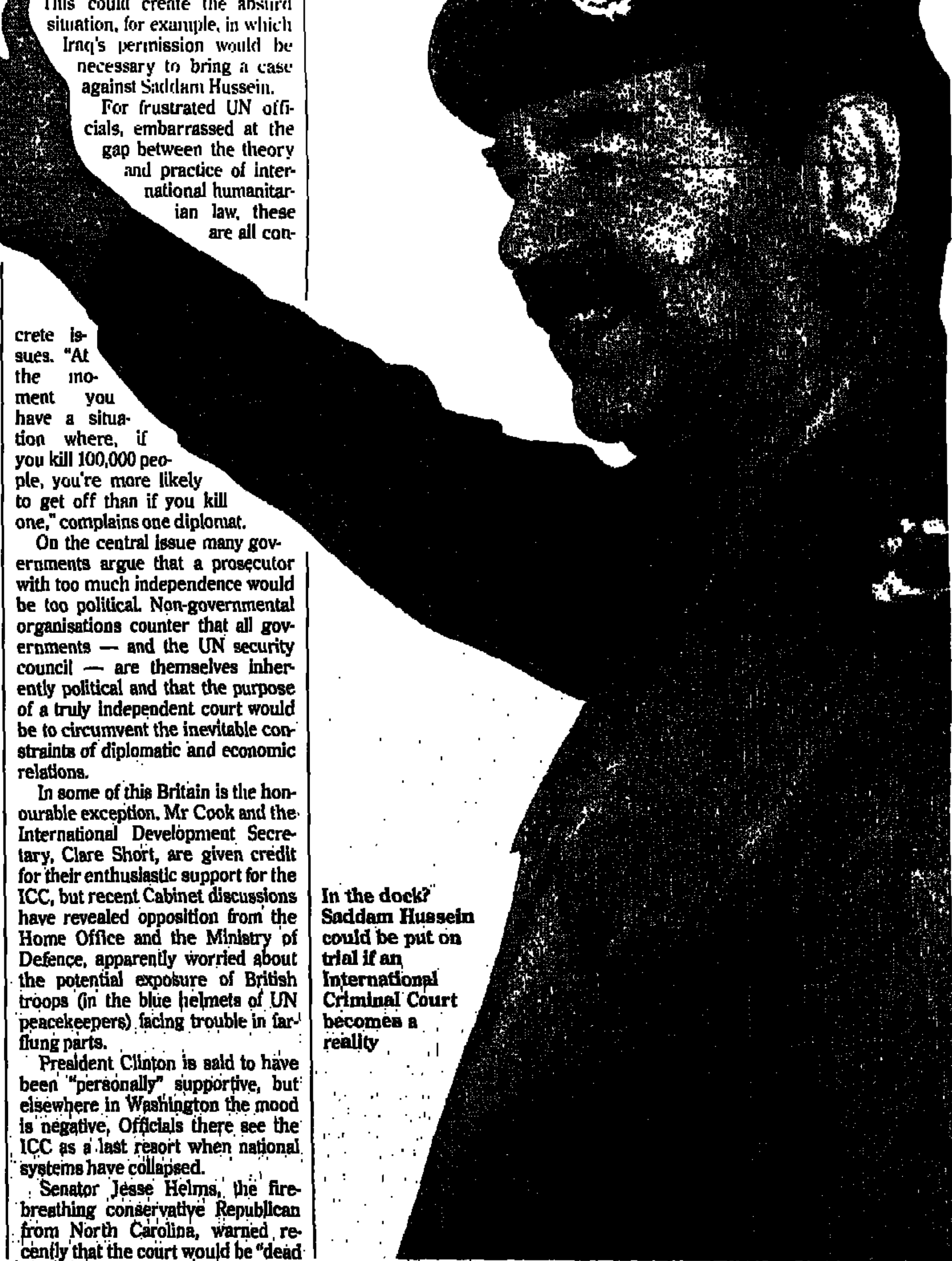
Other countries are pursuing their own agendas and making mischief. Members of the non-aligned movement with poor human rights records such as Algeria, Nigeria, Iran and Egypt are mounting a coordinated campaign, using procedural tricks to undermine what they fear will be a Western-dominated body that would use double standards to sit in judgment on them.

So no one is predicting a clear-cut or happy outcome. "Quite how it will go in Rome is very hard to predict," says one key official. "You can hazard a guess about the main issues but it's difficult to say what it's all going to turn on."

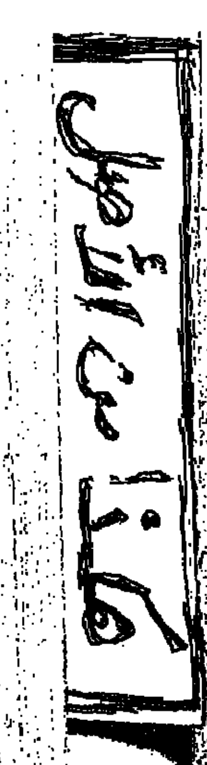
He explains: "The court is such a complex issue with so many strands, and thinking has been developing apace, and still is in many ways. People are only just beginning to make up their minds. But what you can say is that there will have to be a lot of work done to remove all those square brackets in the text."

Richard Bunting of Amnesty International warns: "Behind the scenes, the worst fear is that the whole idea may collapse. But if it doesn't collapse, it could turn into something else — a court we might have to actually lobby against. We just don't believe that any court is better than no court. This should be a major historical development. But there is a real danger of falling at the final hurdle."

How global justice could work



In the dock? Saddam Hussein could be put on trial if an International Criminal Court becomes a reality



Japanese recession risks global crash

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo and Larry Elliott

MARKETS all over the world shuddered last week after news that Japan's economy had slumped into a deep recession, putting renewed pressure on the yen and threatening a second Asian financial meltdown.

Amid fears that a new crisis could spill over into a global crash and trigger 1930s-style trade wars, the Japanese prime minister, Rutaro Hashimoto, was lambasted in parliament for Tokyo's inability to revive the ailing economy.

The yen was again under pressure on the foreign exchanges following evidence that Japan is contracting at an annual rate of more than 5 per cent — its worst economic retrenchment since the war.

Although the cheaper yen will help Japan's exports, it will fan protectionist sentiment in the United States and put renewed pressure on other Asian countries which suffered big currency devaluations in the first wave of the crisis late last year. South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand are all trying to export their way out of difficulties, and increased competition from Japan risks triggering a fresh round of devaluations.

Most worrying of all for the markets, a new bout of instability could suck China and Hong Kong into the currency turmoil. China's rapid economic growth has been built on exports, but so far it has resisted the temptation to devalue. Should Beijing be forced to devalue, it would start a domino effect across the region and beyond.

The US Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin, admitted that the US was deeply concerned about Japan, but so far the leading Western industrial nations have made no attempt to intervene in the currency markets to prop up the yen.

However, tougher action may be forced on the G7 nations should the Japanese slump be followed by further bad news in the coming weeks. According to the Economic Planning Agency, Japan's gross domestic product for the tax year ending on March 31 shrank by 0.7 per cent.

In the final quarter of the year, the economy had contracted by more than 5 per cent over the same period the year before.

Nosediving market confidence in Japan pushed the yen down to 144.75 to the dollar at the end of last week, the latest in a series of seven-year lows, while the Nikkei index of the Tokyo stock exchange briefly dipped under 15,000 for the first time in five months.

In parliament, Mr Hashimoto faced the second no-confidence motion in his two-and-a-half-year premiership as opposition parties blamed him for suffocating growth by introducing a consumption tax hike last April.

The ruling Liberal Democratic party defeated the motion comfortably, but the confrontation over the economy sets the stage for an upper house election campaign on July 12 that could be crucial for the prime minister.

Slow personal consumption, a credit crunch and financial turmoil elsewhere in Asia have had a devastating effect on Japan. The number of bankruptcies in April rose 26 per cent compared with a year before and the jobless rate jumped to a post-war high of 4.1 per cent — a huge psychological blow to a nation that has prided itself on full, lifelong employment.

Adding to the sense of gloom is the fear that there is no end in sight for this downturn because the problems are not cyclical, as in the past, but structural. In particular, there is anxiety about the financial system, which is teetering under the burden of at least 77 trillion yen ($535 billion) in problem loans, dating back to the excesses of the bubble economy more than 10 years ago.

Several small banks and one big one, the Hokkaido Takushoku, have already folded. Financial institutions are now so terrified of making new loans that many small businesses have gone to the wall. This has in turn hit consumer spending and company earnings, pushing Japan to the brink of deflation.

To ease the situation the government has put up 30 trillion yen ($210 billion) to support the banking system. It is also about to introduce Japan's largest fiscal stimulus package — a 16 trillion yen bundle of tax cuts and public works spending, equivalent to more than 2 per cent of GDP.

In Brief

GOLDMAN SACHS posted record profits of more than $1 billion for the second quarter of 1998 as it confirmed plans for a stock market flotation from which its partners stand to make as much as $125 million each.

RANA TALWAR, aged 50, was appointed chief executive of Standard Chartered Bank, the first Indian in Britain to run a leading public company.

GLEN TRAVERS, a 42-year-old Australian entrepreneur, left Cortecs, the drug development company he founded 13 years ago, in a further blow to the troubled British biotechnology sector.

A JOINT fine of $650,000 was levied on subsidiaries of the Financial Options Group of Manchester for offences relating to the mis-selling of pensions, bringing to more than $6 million penalties levied this year by the Personal Investment Authority.

BOEING is to cut production of its 747 aircraft by a third next year because of falling Asian demand for jumbo jets.

GLOBAL sales of computer microchips fell for a second successive month in April, though there was a 1 per cent growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

WORLDCOM and British Airways threatened to pull out of alliances if the EU insists on tough terms. WorldCom may abandon its merger with MCI Communications if the EU insists it sells UUNet Technologies, and BA said it may call off its deal with American Airlines if it has to lose 330 "slots" at Heathrow.

HONDA is to invest $700 million to expand its British car plant, with the prospect of 1,000 more jobs in Swindon, Wiltshire.

VOLKSWAGEN, the German group which snapped up Rolls-Royce Motors, agreed to buy Lamborghini, the Italian luxury sports car maker.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates June 15	Sterling rates June 8
Australia	2.7850-2.7889	2.7272-2.7311
Austria	20.86-20.87	20.41-20.42
Belgium	61.11-61.20	59.80-59.92
Canada	2.4079-2.4100	2.3837-2.3859
Denmark	11.26-11.29	11.04-11.05
France	9.936-9.944	9.72-9.73
Germany	2.9637-2.9663	2.9000-2.9033
Hong Kong	12.65-12.68	12.64-12.65
Ireland	1.1753-1.1779	1.1498-1.1521
Italy	2,918-2,922	2,857-2,861
Japan	239.13-239.43	229.11-229.38
Netherlands	3.3408-3.3434	3.2696-3.2731
New Zealand	3.2960-3.3044	3.2042-3.2105
Norway	12.57-12.58	12.18-12.19
Portugal	303.19-303.80	297.08-297.30
Spain	251.49-251.65	246.26-246.49
Sweden	13.23-13.25	12.78-12.80
Switzerland	2.4677-2.4707	2.4103-2.4134
USA	1.6346-1.6353	1.6322-1.6332
ECU	1.4991-1.5027	1.4719-1.4737

FTSE100 Share index down [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index down [illegible] at [illegible]. Gold down [illegible] at [illegible].

Anxious? Insecure? You'll get used to it

Dan Atkinson and **Larry Elliott** on the perils of the brave new economic world we struggle to live in

TWO decades into de-regulation, liberalisation and bracing globalisation, what do you think of the show so far? Perhaps you're having a ball. Or perhaps not.

For the fortunate élite, the past two decades have been exciting, as they cruised the world, club-class, spreading word of the wonders of the free market. Down below, their fellows in the City and Wall Street are earning sums that fuel lives of almost incomprehensible affluence.

But the chances are that you are not one of the few. You may have been out of work; figures last year showed that unemployment is a mainstream social condition, with at least one spell of joblessness experienced by one in five men and one in eight women. You may have lost your house: 1 million Britons did between 1990 and 1996. Or been made bankrupt: 22,000 a year are declared insolvent. You may have escaped these misfortunes, yet remain anxious and insecure. At work, you are spot-tested for drugs and alcohol, expected to work ever-lengthening hours, attend team-building weekends, allow psychometric testing to weed out "unhelpful attitudes" and co-operate with management consultants to eliminate your job. You are informed that the "job for life" culture is dead.

Even off duty, you are video-taped by closed-circuit TV, your house is now liable to bugging by the police without warrant, your child-rearing is scrutinised by public employees and you are bombarded with prohibitions on eating, drinking, smoking and even hand-washing.

De-regulation applies to money, but not to you. As business and capital shrug off the remaining constraints of the post-war years, so the individual is confined to an ever-narrowing corridor of acceptable behaviour, at work, home, even in bed. In contrast to previous conformist social systems — like Scandinavian social democracy — there is no trade-off between shrinking personal liberty and economic security. The constraints on the person exist beside a financial system which believes that it is neither possible nor desirable to offer economic security and that those who fail to be competitive must be downsized.

Insecurity comes in a double-dose for the worker who now fears not only redundancy and the dole but the knock on the door from the child-welfare inspector or "homework police".

This is the New Command Economy, in which capital is free and working people have been nationalised. Unemployment is a fact of life, huge inequalities have opened up in income and wealth, the private sector does as it likes and the public does at it is told. The very instability left by the rampaging wolf of global capital makes necessary much more stringent social controls; as jobs move out of the inner-city neighbourhood so the closed-circuit cameras and "zero-tolerance" police move in. And the new culture of control is a makework scheme for politicians and administrators: having abandoned any pretence at managing the economy, they channel their energies into managing the citizenry.

But the new economic system can work in no other way. Money scours the world for the highest return and, in doing so, it generates colossal instability. The role of governments is to maintain order in their territories (securing the operating bases of multinational business) and package their populations into skilled, docile workforces with the correct attitudes in the hope that international finance may offer jobs through inward investment.

Under the lash from capital seeking higher returns, big business abandons all pretence at patriotism and social responsibility and shops internationally for the most "competitive and flexible" workers. The net effect is that the entire burden of risk, rather than being shared by people and business, is loaded on to the backs of people. At the strategic level, this means giving absolute priority to low inflation, allowing the burden of "adjustment" to fall exclusively on the workforce.

ILLUSTRATION: ANDRZEJ KLIMOWSKY

FOR THE ordinary person this means that whenever the economy hits one of its periodic shocks, the holders of wealth share none of the pain (because inflation is kept down and the exchange-rate held steady) and a sharp rise in unemployment is the only way of adjusting the economy.

It is in the workplace that the insecurity generated by this unfair burden of risk is felt most keenly. The assault on the traditional career ladder is central to the destruction of job security, as is the insidious process whereby employees and whole departments are cut adrift into independent business units and ordered to tender for their own work against external contractors.

But this shifting of the burden of insecurity also manifests itself in an new culture of moral hazard, in which the operations of the financial sector are effectively underwritten by the sacrifices of ordinary people.

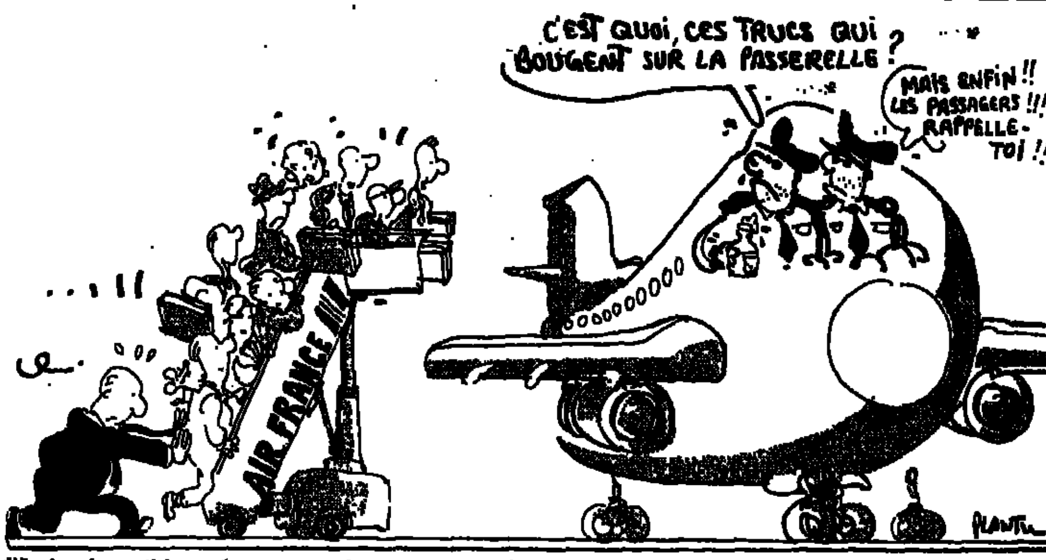
The most blatant examples of this have been seen in the Mexican and Far Eastern crises, in which the International Monetary Fund has bailed out the speculators and bankers and imposed austerity programmes. But it happened in Britain, too, in March 1994. City traders marked down the price of British government paper in response to official data showing an upward jump in average earnings in the UK. The traders' action put pressure on the Government to raise interest rates to make its paper more attractive. But that rise in average earnings was almost entirely due to the enormous bonuses paid in 1993-94 to City traders. They punished the country for their good fortune.

British taxpayers are subsidising finance and big business, too. Staggering sums are paid in bribes to multinational companies to attract them or to keep them in Britain. Ford trousered $115 million to modernise the Jaguar plant at Coventry and about $25 million to renovate Halewood on Merseyside. And not all these bribes are published, because they are considered commercially confidential.

Meanwhile the citizen learns that his own safety net has become unaffordable and that radical restructuring — cuts — will follow.

The lesson is clear: the only means of escape from insecurity is to remain ahead of the curve as assets are looted, and let your fellows go hang.

The Age Of Insecurity, by Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, is published by Verso, £17



'What're those things that are moving on the steps?' 'But surely you remember? . . . Passengers!'

Pilots brought down to earth

COMMENT
Erik Izraelewicz

BY JUNE 10, Air France's striking pilots no longer had any choice but to end their industrial action. Once the national airline's management realised, on June 6, that it had the total support of the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, it could afford a showdown with the strikers: France's best-paid workers were going to have to back down.

During the 10 days of their strike the pilots behaved in an unbelievably unprofessional manner. The so-called "aristocrats" of air transport showed themselves to be extraordinarily blind to the interests of the people most immediately affected by their action — the company's French and foreign customers, who were fed up with being stranded at airports, and French taxpayers, who felt that after spending 20 billion francs ($3.3 billion) since 1993 on bailing out Air France they had been generous enough to the company's fat-cat pilots.

Above all, the strikers behaved selfishly towards the airline's other staff. At no point did the pilots, who number 3,200 out of a total workforce of 46,000, make any genuine attempt to secure their support. They even hinted to those who had already taken large strides to improve productivity that they might once again end up the losers in any agreement between management and pilots.

The pilots also apparently failed to realise that public opinion was against them: only 38 per cent of the public approved of their action, a very low figure compared with the approval rate of other big strikes in recent years.

When they launched their go-it-alone industrial action, the pilots gave the impression that they had never set foot outside their flight decks. They proved unexpectedly ham-fisted in their handling of the strike, given the resources that they enjoyed through the main pilots' trade union, the SNPL.

Jospin and the head of Air France, Jean-Cyril Spinetta, were able to exploit the pilots' shortsightedness and their inability to recognise that the world of air transport had moved into a completely new era. The pilots wanted to hijack the World Cup. With only a few hours to go before its opening ceremony, they were forced to admit defeat.

As it turned out — and as Jospin realised — the World Cup could easily go ahead without Air France. The strike call, which was well observed by the pilots, caused a great deal of disruption and helped to tarnish the image of France and Air France abroad. But it did not disrupt the planned World Cup events: Air France's French and foreign competitors, along with alternative forms of transport, managed to fill the gaps.

World air transport has gone through a revolution in the past 20 years. Both technically and economically it has been turned upside down. Not so long ago air transport was little more than a craft industry that employed highly qualified staff and catered for the rich and the privileged.

It is now a major industry with a mass clientèle. Ever bigger, more powerful, less expensive aircraft are now crossing the skies. A range of new services have been introduced. New companies, in both the industrialised and the emerging countries, have been formed.

At an international and domestic level the air travel market has expanded rapidly. And the rules of the game have changed greatly, with a trend towards de-regulation that began in the United States and gradually spread to the rest of the world.

In the face of spiralling competition, the companies and their employees naturally dug in their heels and tried to preserve their existing position. A number of the major private companies that pioneered mass air travel sat on their laurels and failed to foresee the emergence of smaller competitors; some of them, such as PanAm in the US, failed to survive.

Many national airlines, which felt protected by their monopolistic positions, were slow to realise that the rules had changed and that the private companies had gained an important foothold in their home markets.

In many cases airline staff in both the US and France opposed the changes that had been made inevitable by the transition from a craft industry to a means of mass travel.

Once the government decided to take a firm line against the strike, it dawned on the pilots that the future of Air France was in the balance. Having being forced to remove their blinkers, they eventually had no choice but to back down.

(June 11)

Asean must learn to cope with life after Suharto

Jean-Claude Pomonti in Bangkok

THE Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has been seriously weakened by a 10-month long economic crisis, for which it has failed to find a solution. It will now also have to get used to the fact that Indonesia, its largest member, which controls all the important sea routes and accounts for three-fifths of its population, is no longer ruled by an autocratic regime.

As Thailand never really went to the trouble of making itself the continental crossroads of Southeast Asia, Indonesia became Asean's linchpin. General Suharto, the last surviving founder member of an association set up in 1967 at the height of United States intervention in Vietnam, came to be seen as Asean's grand old man.

He virtually exercised a right of veto within an organisation that worked on the basis of consensus. If he disagreed with a project, it was scrapped. Equally, it was difficult for another member country to oppose any proposal Indonesia put forward.

Suharto was one of the prime movers of Vietnam's precipitous entry into Asean in 1995. He believed that Vietnam could act as a counterbalance to China, a country he had always mistrusted. His tour of Cambodia, Laos and Burma at the beginning of last year suggested that he was keen for those three states to join Asean too.

However, when Hun Sen came to power in Cambodia three months later, Suharto reacted violently against what he regarded as a provocation: Cambodia was excluded from joining Asean, a solution that happened also to suit Thailand.

Because of its rule of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, Asean has not dared tackle the issue of East Timor, whose annexation by Indonesia in 1975 has never been recognised by the United Nations. It also towed Suharto's line when he refused to discuss "social clauses" at the first ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Singapore.

Suharto was also a great advocate of "Asian values", which was his way of justifying the economic dynamics of an autocratic regime. His institutionalised, semi-military regime was regarded as a model by Burma's generals and certain members of the regime in Cambodia. It was, above all, seen as "proof" that development in Third World Asian countries could not be achieved without firm government.

The regional implications of Suharto's stepdown are therefore considerable. Regimes that rely on cronyism, authoritarianism, censorship and nepotism, while at the same time suffering from the rigours of power, have shown themselves ill-equipped to deal with the economic crisis.

In Thailand, for example, the team that in 1996 won the most corrupt elections in the country's history was forced the following year to hand over to a government that was more honest and better equipped to pick up the pieces after a poorly handled crisis.

Although Mahathir Mohamad made plans long ago for his second-in-command, Anwar Ibrahim, eventually to succeed him, events in Indonesia could have repercussions in Malaysia and bring Anwar to power earlier than planned.

In the longer term, the lesson of Indonesia could also affect developments in Vietnam, which has been sucked into the regional crisis. Its regime of communist, ex-army officers will need to get its second wind if it is to inject new life into its policy of "openness", which was first implemented in 1986 and is now running out of steam.

In the immediate future Asean will be forced to devise a new set of policies. That will not be easy, given the diversity of its member nations and the inability of some of them to deal with the effects of a crisis they underestimated.

Asean has lost its bearings. It is no longer a club of emerging economies that earned worldwide admiration only a year ago. Its internal markets have collapsed, and it is having to struggle to hang on to or win back foreign markets.

When poor countries such as Vietnam and Burma joined Asean, it meant that the organisation once again had a foot in the Third World. The collapse of Indonesia has further accentuated that trend.

No one yet knows how or when Indonesia, a huge multi-ethnic group of 17,000 islands stretching 5,000km from west to east, will return to stability. The post-Suharto era has opened up a new chapter in Southeast Asia's history. It remains to be seen how Asean will adjust to it.

(June 11)

Economic crisis threatens Iran's liberals

Mouna Naïm

"IF THE mayor of Tehran, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, receives a proper trial, the charges against him won't stick," says the Iranian dissident writer and journalist, Faraj Sarkouhi, who is visiting Paris at the invitation of Reporters Sans Frontières. "But as the judiciary is in the hands of the conservatives, there's no knowing how the trial will turn out."

Sarkouhi thinks that if Karbaschi is sentenced it will mark the beginning of a serious political crisis, or else the first stage of a coup against Iran's modernist president, Mohammed Khatami.

According to Sarkouhi, Iran's shift towards democracy depends not on Khatami but on two other factors: the Iranians' growing "awareness of what they want" and of the role that liberals, social democrats and non-religious groups will inevitably play.

Sarkouhi was freed in February after serving a one-year jail sentence for "negative propaganda against Iran" and "a breach of the country's security". His trial took place before Khatami came to office last May.

He wishes Khatami every success, but thinks that he is guilty of being too cautious. "Time is ticking away, and Khatami hasn't got into his stride yet. He will have to speed up the process of opening up politics if he wants to prevent his conservative opponents from exploiting Iran's economic problems at his expense."

Sarkouhi thinks the task is all the more urgent for the president because he is virtually helpless to do anything about the "catastrophic" economic situation. The economy has ground to a halt, he says, because of a combination of three factors: the concentration of the levers of economic power in the hands of Khatami's opponents, the contradictory approaches of the various elements making up the presidential majority, and falling oil prices.

Sarkouhi, who has been invited by the writers' organisation the International Writers' Parliament, to spend a year in Frankfurt, will return to Iran once he has finished writing a novel. "But that will depend on the political situation," he says, adding that he may already be guilty of three "crimes" in the eyes of the authorities.

First, he met Salman Rushdie, author of The Satanic Verses, who was condemned to death by a fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. He has also publicly challenged the official Iranian line that human rights can sometimes be incompatible with local traditions.

Furthermore his meeting with the Swedish foreign minister could also work against him because any conversation between a writer and a foreign politician is regarded as suspect in Iran.

(June 11)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
June 21 1998

Who was behind the killing of seven French Trappist monks in Algeria two years ago? **Henri Tincq** investigates

Monks' murder mystery deepens

TWO years after the kidnapping and murder of seven French Trappist monks in Algeria, a great deal of uncertainty still surrounds the negotiations that took place between the Algerian and French authorities after the kidnapping, the circumstances of the murders and the discovery of the bodies.

However, more information has recently emerged about a tragedy that shocked the Christian and Muslim communities of both nations. Evidence that has come to light throws doubt on the theory that the fundamentalist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) was solely responsible.

A commando unit of 20 men entered the village of Tibehirine during the night of March 26-27, 1996, commandeered taxis, entered the monastery by its main gate and drove back through the village with a number of hostages. Soon after the monks were abducted the possibility that the kidnappers had accomplices was raised.

Was the fact that the village was isolated and its inhabitants terrorised enough to explain the impunity with which the kidnappers were able to act? It is a question worth asking, particularly since the operation had not been as meticulously planned as was claimed.

The kidnappers, for example, did not know how many monks lived in the monastery. Two of the monks, along with a group of lay people on retreat who were staying in another wing of the building, remained undiscovered.

Did the armed Islamists have any reason to bear a grudge against the monks? Witnesses say they showed a mixture of awe and respect towards the monks because they had remained neutral, showed them no hostility, given medical treatment to anyone, whether an Islamist or a soldier, and helped the local population to farm the land.

On the evening of May 23, communiqué 44 of the GIA revealed that the French hostages had "had their throats slit". The archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, immediately went to Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris to extinguish the candles he had lit to keep alive the memory of the kidnapped monks.

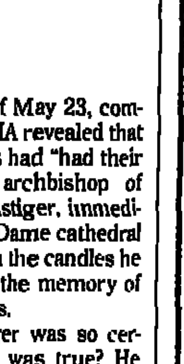
How come Lustiger was so certain that the report was true? He had been informed not by the Algerian authorities, who were extremely embarrassed, but by the French foreign ministry, which had quickly confirmed that the GIA's communiqué was genuine.

There were further mysteries. When the head of the Trappist Cistercian order, Bernardo Olivera, and his assistant, Armand Veilleux, flew into Algiers from Rome a week later, they were told the bodies of the seven monks had just been found.

But when they and the archbishop of Algiers, Monseigneur Henri Teissier, asked for permission to drive 80km to Médéa so that they could pay their last respects to their dead brethren, they were told that the bodies were already in the morgue of a military hospital near the capital. Seven coffins had been flown in from Marseille.

Many believe that the army attacked a GIA unit, not realising the monks were with them

The three men had to insist on being allowed into the morgue. To their amazement, they found a head placed in each of the seven coffins. The bodies were never found. They were asked to keep quiet about their macabre discovery, otherwise Algeria would be "humiliated". It was only four days later, at the monks' funeral in Tibehirine cemetery, that their families discovered what was in the coffins — which had been weighted with earth for the ceremony.





'Could you organise a massacre or two so we can avoid being blamed?'

Why was such a charade deemed necessary? The most "favourable" interpretation of events, according to some churchmen, is that the army attacked a GIA unit, not realising that the monks were with them, then tried to cover up its mistake. The monks could well have been machine-gunned during the engagement and decapitated shortly afterwards (when young recruits mop up an area, their chiefs often ask them to bring back the heads of their dead foes).

But according to another theory the army — or a section of the army or security services — had infiltrated the cell of the monks' kidnappers from the start. Things went badly wrong, and in the end the army decided to liquidate everyone, including the hostages — it was in no one's interest that they should survive, in case they revealed what they knew.

This theory has now been corroborated by the evidence of former security officers. They say that although Djamel Zitouni, the GIA's supreme emir (who was himself assassinated after the Tibehirine episode), may have done the "dirty deed" himself, he was manipulated. Instructions had been given that the monks should be found, dead or alive, in a village near Médéa, the birthplace of the leader of a small Islamist group known as the Jihad League; and indeed the monks' remains were found four kilometres from Médéa in an area that had long been under tight police control.

The turning point in the whole story came when Zitouni sent an emissary to the French ambassador on April 30. He left a cassette recording which proved that the monks were still alive. After getting a "receipt" on embassy-headed note paper and being told to stay in contact, he was driven away in a bullet-proof car and never seen again. According to new eyewitness accounts revealed in Algiers, he was assassinated as he got out of the car.

That episode sparked a rumour that France was guilty of betrayal. This allegation was repeated both in the GIA communiqué announcing the monks' execution and by the Algerian security services, which had not forgiven the French for trying to make contact with the Islamists.

In the book Algérie, FIS: Sa Direction Parle (L'Harmattan, 1998), a series of interviews with leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front, Djaffar El Houari says: "The French security services were in contact with the monks' kidnappers. They wanted the negotiations to drag on as long as possible . . . they had managed to find out where the monks were being held and were preparing a commando operation to free them. Once they got wind of the plan, the Algerian authorities reacted extremely negatively."

An interview with a former security officer, "Captain Haroun", published in the March 1998 issue of the magazine Confluences Méditerranée, has caused a considerable stir in Algiers. Haroun claims that Zitouni's righthand man was a lieutenant in the intelligence service and that the monks' death was the result of a clash between the Algerian and French security services.

It appears that a miniature transmitter was passed on to the monks during the negotiations. The discovery of the transmitter cost them their lives, according to Haroun. On May 26, 1996, the prior of the Cistercian abbey of Aiguebelle told a French newspaper that "a man from the south of France, acting as a French government emissary, gave communion to each of the monks and stayed with them for 10 minutes". Did this give him the opportunity to pass the transmitter to the monks?

The virulence with which the French foreign ministry denied the prior's version of events betrayed genuine embarrassment. The superior of the Aiguebelle abbey eventually admitted that the foreign ministry had put pressure on him to contradict his colleague. If the existence of an electronic device turned out one day to be true, part of the mystery surrounding the murder of the Tibehirine monks would be solved.

(June 7-8)

Why was bishop a target?

WAS the Dominican bishop of Oran, Monseigneur Pierre Claverie, a man who knew too much about the "negotiations" between France and Algeria over the monks? That was rumoured immediately after the bomb attack that cost him his life on August 1, 1996, which was thought to be the work of Islamists.

Claverie had travelled to Algiers the previous day at the personal invitation of the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, who was engaged in talks aimed at improving relations with Algeria. Claverie hesitated before travelling to the capital: he had been threatened by Islamists and by elements close to the regime because he had spoken out against both of them.

He did not visit the monks' graves in Tibehirine and instead remained in Algiers, where he planned to stay the night.

In the early evening he changed his mind and went to the airport. The Oran flight was fully booked, so he and two French consular officials put their names down on a waiting list. Mysteriously three seats became available.

In Oran Claverie's young chauffeur, Mohamed Bouchikhi, drove him to the bishop's palace. He parked the car in the courtyard and the two men walked towards the front door of the building. A side door gave on to a little street normally frequented by young dropouts — and which witnesses later said was evacuated shortly before the attack. A bomb detonated by a remote-control device, operated from outside the side door, exploded as the two men entered the building.

Was this killing — the 19th murder of a Christian in Algeria within two years — connected with the case of the monks? Or was it a warning to the Algerian government, which was about to normalise relations with France after De Charette's visit?

French diplomats at the time were convinced that the Islamists had as good a reason as any other group to kill the bishop. But they have increasingly come round to the second hypothesis, given the extreme sophistication of the equipment used in the attack.

(June 7-8)

Questions over author of GIA communiqué

RESPONSIBILITY for the kidnapping of the Tibehirine monks was claimed only three weeks after the event took place. GIA communiqué 43, issued on April 18 and signed by its emir, Djamel Zitouni, demanded the release of such terrorists as Abdelhak Layada, then held in Algeria, in return for freeing the monks. France refused to do a deal.

Investigators continue to be intrigued by the theological arguments used at the time to justify death threats against leading Christian figures. Some suspect that documents attributed to the GIA may have been inspired, if not directly written, by specialists in Islamic theology or law.

They see as evidence for this a 35-page booklet by Nasreddin Lebateller, published in Beirut last year. It is a comprehensive justification of the monks' murder, and absolves the killers of all blame.

The booklet is based on the work of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), a jurist often quoted in Islamist literature. It contains the following statement: "When the monk mixes with men, it is permitted to kill him. An original sinner, he invites Muslims to espouse his religion."

Lebateller's real name is Jean Michot, a Belgian convert to Islam who taught at the highly respected Catholic university of Louvain-la-Neuve. The booklet caused a scandal at the university, which terminated its contract with him. Michot has since moved to Oxford.

Why did Michot publish his booklet under an assumed name? Why did he bring out such a fervent and detailed exegesis of the work of Ibn Taymiyya during the wave of revulsion that followed the killing of the monks? Could he have inspired, even unwittingly, the way the GIA communiqué was couched?

There is, of course, not a shred of concrete evidence to support such a theory. But another Islamologist, Alain Grignard, who makes no secret of the fact that he belongs to Belgium's anti-terrorist cell, published last September a linguistic study of Islamist communiqués in which he demonstrated that there is a "GIA style", which is notable for its archaisms, paraphrases and extracts from radical authors, and which is very different from the popular language of someone like Zitouni.

Who writes those communiqués? Students or intellectuals working for the GIA, or manipulators of religious propaganda working for a regime that hopes to confound the Islamist groups by tarring them with the brush of religious extremism? The question may not yet have an answer, but it is certainly one worth asking.

(June 7-8)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
June 21 1998

Honest Engagement

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT Clinton last week defended his China policy, saying the world is better served by engagement than by isolation. But as critics from conservative Gary Bauer to liberal Sen. Paul Wellstone point out, that isn't really the issue; the issue is *how* the United States will engage with China. In that regard, Mr. Clinton's speech did little to allay concern that his administration is so eager for warmer ties with China that it too easily will sacrifice U.S. interests on matters such as nonproliferation and U.S. principles when it comes to human rights.

At a minimum, U.S. engagement with China should be based on an honest assessment of that nation's behavior and of the fruits of the relationship. The same day Mr. Clinton spoke, a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suggested that such honesty has been missing from the Clinton policy. The administration was so eager to broaden commercial exchanges with China, and in particular the launching of U.S. satellites atop Chinese missiles, that it downplayed or dismissed strong evidence of Chinese actions damaging to world stability. Gordon Oehler, former director of the CIA's Nonproliferation Center, told the committee that U.S. intelligence agencies were "virtually certain" that China had sold nuclear-capable missiles to Pakistan, which should under U.S. law have triggered sanctions. But the Clinton administration chose to ignore the evidence, Mr. Oehler said, adding that "intelligence analysts were very discouraged to see their work was regularly dismissed" by Clinton aides.

It takes a particular level of chutzpah for Mr. Clinton now to point to Pakistani and Indian nuclear tests as a justification for closer ties with China. India's unfortunate decision to test undoubtedly stemmed from a complex mixture of motives, but certainly part of the stew was China's assistance to Pakistan's nuclear program — insufficiently condemned by the United States — and U.S. fawning over China, disproportionate to the attention paid surrounding democracies such as Japan and India. Now Mr. Clinton is pointing to the negative results of that flawed policy to justify its continuation.

The same lack of forthrightness is evident in Mr. Clinton's discussion of human rights. He claimed credit, during a news conference last week, for the release of "several" political dissidents, and said that because of the U.S.-China relationship "it has been made more likely that political dissent would be more respected." And, in his speech, he claimed support for his policy from Wang Dan, one of two dissidents recently released into exile.

But Mr. Clinton did not mention the thousands of political prisoners who remain in jail and the many who have been arrested even since the release of Wang Dan and Wei Jingsheng; he did not mention how dissidents and even U.S. citizens, returning to China to visit relatives, are being harassed apparently in connection with his upcoming visit; he did not mention how Bao Tong, a purged senior official, has been warned to remain silent after giving a few candid interviews.

It is true that Wang Dan, a student leader during the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations, supports a policy of engagement, including Mr. Clinton's visit. But when asked about the president's decision to be received at Tiananmen Square, the modest and cautious Mr. Wang told The Washington Post, "Of course, in terms of my own feelings, I'm not comfortable with it. But I respect the American government's right to make its own decisions.

"I would like to see better economic cooperation between the two countries," Wang Dan added. "At the same time, I hope the U.S. government will maintain an adequate moral standard." That is the kind of engagement most Americans could support.

Mitsubishi To Pay $34m for Harassment

Kirstin Downey Grimsley
In Chicago

MITSUBISHI said last week that it has agreed to pay a record $34 million to to settle the nation's largest sexual harassment lawsuit, and apologized to the more than 300 women who claimed they had been mistreated at the company's auto plant in Normal, Illinois.

"There have been problems at the plant, which required correction," said Kohei Ikuta, an executive vice president at Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing of America, Inc., speaking at a news conference here. "We again extend our sincere regret to any woman who has been harmed."

The size of the settlement is more than triple the previous record amount in a sexual harassment case. Mitsubishi separately paid $10 million last year to settle a private lawsuit brought by 29 female employees who raised similar allegations.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed the class action lawsuit in 1996, alleging that hundreds of women had been groped, grabbed, pressured for sex and threatened by co-workers at the plant, and that company managers did little to stop the mistreatment.

EEOC officials said the magnitude of the settlement should serve as a stern warning to America's employers and workers that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

"This settlement today is historic," EEOC Chairman Paul M. Igasaki said.

More than 300 female employees were represented in the suit and will receive shares of the settlement. However, several hundred more could now claim a share of the total by stepping forward with allegations that they too were harassed at the plant over the last decade, EEOC officials said.

The amount of money distributed to individual claimants will be based on the severity of the mistreatment they suffered. Those with the most severe claims may receive amounts approaching the $300,000 cap on damages imposed by the 1991 Civil Rights Act, while others who suffered less serious effects may receive a few thousand dollars each.

Terms of the settlement include the creation of a three-person panel of outside monitors to ensure that policies banning sexual harassment at the plant are effective and that workers' complaints are promptly and thoroughly investigated. The monitors are: Joyce Tucker, a Republican-appointed former EEOC commissioner; Nancy Kreiter, research director at Women Employed, a Chicago-based women's rights organization; and George Gallant, a Chicago attorney who helped bring the private sexual harassment lawsuit against Mitsubishi.

Mitsubishi officials said that 20 employees had been fired as a result of the case, and that others had been disciplined.

"While we may have disagreed in the past with the EEOC on the extent of the problem and whether the company's response went far enough, with today's settlement, our disagreements with the EEOC ends," Ikuta said. "Our goal is to work effectively with the EEOC and the decree monitors to ensure that our workplace environment achieves our mutual goals of zero tolerance."

EEOC Chairman Igasaki said, "While the $34 million in monetary relief is the largest sexual harassment judgement ever, and the appointment of the panel of monitors is equally significant, the most important aspect of this settlement is what happens from this point forward. Can we work together to respond quickly, fairly and decisively to signs of harassment?"

Attorneys for both sides credited Abner V. Mikva, a former U.S. appellate judge and White House counsel who had been appointed a special master in the case, for helping to bring the long-warring parties to an amicable resolution after four weeks of intensive talks.

Mikva, in an interview, said it took more than two years to resolve the suit because at first Mitsubishi's top executives simply didn't see the magnitude of the problem. Later, Mikva said, the executives thought the complaints were overblown. "It's part of the good-old-boys' reaction, like patting people on the fanny, that it's nothing to worry about," he said.

Mikva said it also appeared to him that the Japanese executives, many of whom had limited English proficiency, had good technical abilities but couldn't handle the complex intercultural communication required. "They appointed people with the wrong skills," Mikva said.

Separately, EEOC Chairman Igasaki, at the news conference, disputed suggestions that Japanese cultural attitudes toward women had created an atmosphere where some male workers believed that sexual harassment would be tolerated.

Starr Admits Leaks to Press

Howard Kurtz

INDEPENDENT counsel Kenneth W. Starr says that he and his top deputy have often spoken to reporters on a not-for-attribution basis about their investigation of President Clinton and his relationship with Monica S. Lewinsky, sometimes discussing sensitive information about what witnesses have told prosecutors.

In an interview with Steven Brill, founder of the media magazine Brill's Content, Starr said there was "nothing improper" about such discussions with reporters "if you are talking about what witnesses tell FBI agents or us before they testify before the grand jury or about related matters."

"I have talked with reporters on background on some occasions," Starr said, adding that his deputy, Jackie Bennett Jr., "has spent much of his time talking to individual reporters." In fact, he said, on January 21, the day the Lewinsky story broke, Bennett spent "much of the day briefing the press."

In an apparent reference to the White House, Starr also said granting such interviews is justified in "a situation where what we are doing is countering misinformation that is being spread about our investigation in order to discredit our office . . . I think it is our obligation to counter that kind of misinformation."

Starr's disclosures follow months of charges and countercharges between his office and the White House, each blaming the other for alleged leaks in the sex-and-perjury probe involving former White House intern Lewinsky. The administration wasted little time in seeking to capitalize on Starr's remarks.

White House spokesman James Kennedy said the article "raises grave concerns about Mr. Starr's entire investigation." He said that an "independent investigator" must be named to "not only evaluate how Mr. Starr has conducted this investigation but also address his pattern of violating grand jury secrecy laws."

Brill charges that Starr's investigation constitutes an "abuse of power" and says there have been court decisions which hold that the criminal prohibition against leaking investigative material applies to prosecutors providing information about prospective witnesses who might testify before a grand jury.

In a statement released by his office last Saturday night, Starr said that Brill had "recklessly and irresponsibly charged the Office of Independent Counsel with improper contacts with the media. These charges are false."

Starr said his office "does not release grand jury material directly or indirectly, on the record or off the record," and that "news reports purporting to disclose grand jury or other investigative matters often rely . . . on witnesses, their attorneys or their confidants."

Starr said his office's contacts with reporters "have been legal, appropriate and consistent with Department of Justice policy," and he quoted Deputy Attorney General Eric H. Holder as saying in 1995 that "in cases involving well-known people, the public has a right to be kept reasonably informed about what steps are being taken to pursue allegations of wrongdoing."



Mexico's Forest Fires Rage on

Molly Moore in San Antonio

ANTONIO JUAREZ is a foot soldier on the front lines of firefighter hell. His weapons against southern Mexico's worst fires in a century are a machete and five gallons of water in a rubber backpack. The peasant farmer charges into burning rubble clad in sandals, a straw cowboy hat and a tattered bandanna.

His futile mission: to help hold back the raging wildfires that are gobbling Mexico's last remaining virgin cloud forest, torching the trees that are home to nesting toucans and quetzals, charring tens of thousands of acres of hunting territory of endangered jaguars and pumas, and creeping beneath the thick blankets of lichen and mosses on the forest floor to consume the roots of rare flora.

"It's so tragic," said Miguel Angel Garcia of the People of the Southwest Woods, one of the most prominent environmental watchdog groups in southern Mexico. "You can replant a burned pine forest; you can't replace a tropical cloud forest that's taken two thousand years to form."

The fires ravaging this mystical forest, called the Chimalapas, which has been the physical and spiritual reserve of Indians who have lived on its fringes for centuries, are so massive and so remote that until recently Mexican authorities couldn't even count all the blazes. Smoke from these fires in the southwestern state of Oaxaca, the largest and most uncontrolled in Mexico, has drifted as far north as Wisconsin and South Dakota and across the U.S. Gulf Coast to Georgia.

The blazes of the Chimalapas — a mountainous subtropical area where under normal conditions clouds continually linger — have not only sent jungle cats, monkeys and birds fleeing for their lives but have reignited long-smoldering feuds between the government and environmentalists, between rich landowners and indigenous peasants, and between isolated mountain villages that have been waging agrarian wars for decades.

The causes of the blazes, as well as the inability to curb them, involve tales of revenge, government indifference and a national pride that may have led to waiting too long to seek help.

But for even the most advanced firefighters, these are no ordinary fires. They burn as no other forest fire. Much of the flame is subterranean, with smoke seeping from cracks and crevices, disguising the true location of the underground conflagration. When the fires do burst into the open, they often are obscured by the jungle's thick canopy. That same canopy has prevented water dumped by small helicopters from reaching the flames.

"It's a lot worse than what I had envisioned," said Paul Weeden, who is coordinating the U.S. firefighting experts dispatched to assist Mexican authorities. "I didn't realize there were so many large fires burning — that the areas were so remote, so inaccessible."

Many of the fires in the Chimalapas are now virtually unreachable. They are a 10-hour hike into a forest so obscured by smoke that Mexican reconnaissance aircraft have been unable to fly near them since the fires began last month. It was only when the U.S. government provided a King Air plane equipped with sensitive infrared sensors that can detect heat beneath the thick veil of smoke, that firefighters discovered the extent of the fires.

Because the cloud forest is such a unique environment — with 22 ecosystems and 62 varieties of reptiles — firefighters have been unable to employ many of the most effective methods of combating wildfires. There is no "back burning," setting controlled fires that consume potential fuel around the wildfire; no "herding" of smaller fires into one large blaze that burns itself out; and no bulldozers and tractors for building fire breaks.

"We're in an environment that's unique to the world," said Mike Conrad, a supervisor from the U.S. Forest Service. "We don't want to lose any more of this than we have to." Already an estimated 16,800 acres have burned.



Blazing forest in Mexico's Lazaro Cardenas mountains, in the state of Tlaxcala PHOTO: JUAN CARLOS [illegible]

The arrival of U.S. experts has not been without problems. Mexican military officials were suspicious of the infrared heat detection system that would be mapping every square mile of the army's most sensitive area — the southern state of Chiapas, adjacent to Oaxaca, where Mexico has deployed tens of thousands of troops since the 1994 rebel Zapatista uprising.

Environmentalists report more than 230 fires are now raging across Mexico. Since January, Mexico has reported 10,000 blazes nationwide that have devoured an estimated 700,000 acres.

"This is the biggest ecological disaster of this century in Mexico," said Homero Aridjis, one of the nation's most prominent environmental activists. "The government can't control this number of fires."

There are nearly as many accusations over the outbreaks as there are fires. Unquestionably, it has been an unusually hot, dry year across Latin America, from Brazil's Amazon to Mexico's northern deserts.

While virtually every state in Mexico is suffering its worst fires in seven decades, environmentalists say the blazes are far worse in the normally humid jungles of Oaxaca and Chiapas, where fires like these haven't been seen in at least a century.

Government officials have laid the blame for most of the fires on peasants who use slash-and-burn techniques to clear their land for the planting season. But the farmers and many environmentalists say the fires are the byproduct of years of government neglect of its poor and indigenous populations.

"They have been abandoned by the government," said environmentalist Miguel Angel Garcia. "That's why they're obligated to use these agricultural techniques in the year 2000."

The region flanking the west side of the Chimalapas has been the site of decades, if not centuries, of conflict. The Zoque Indians have claimed the virgin forest region as their reserve since before the Spanish conquistadors arrived five centuries ago.

But in the past 30 years, the Mexican government has promoted a policy of colonizing less populous areas to relieve overcrowded areas. As a result, entire villages of Mayan Indians — many of them converted to evangelical Christianity — and mixed-blood Mexicans have settled on the fringes of the forest. And each year, ranchers, farmers, loggers and, more recently, drug traffickers have inched deeper into the cloud forest, setting off vicious land disputes.

To aggravate matters, Oaxaca and Chiapas can't even agree on where their border slices through the Chimalapas.

Some villages are now accusing rival communities of setting fires to expropriate more of the jungle, or as revenge against neighbors.

In one of the more sinister scenarios, many environmentalists believe developers may have set fires intentionally to help bolster their efforts to complete a trans-regional highway through the forest, a project long fought by environmentalists.

Meanwhile, villagers like Leonardo Hernandez, 64, continue to trek daily into the burning fires, spraying water on flames and embers with backpack pumps that must be refilled every 10 minutes.

"It's not that we don't know what to do," Hernandez said. "We just don't have the equipment."

As for when the fires will subside, "many people are praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe for miracles," said environmentalist Aridjis. "But the saints haven't answered."

Nuba Caught Up in Sudan's Civil War

Stephen Buckley and Karl Vick in Merrawi

A HELICOPTER gunship plunged out of the sky, raining terror on the village of Nocta in a fertile plain just below Sudan's Nuba Mountains about 15 months ago. Schools were razed. Churches and mosques burned. Villagers said they scurried into nearby hills, leaving behind whatever was not in their hands the moment the firing began.

James Karama, 67, said he lost his 17 goats and 18 cows. For the past year he has survived on mangoes, guavas and leaves — as have tens of thousands of the Nuba people, long among Africa's most isolated populations.

The Nuba are a people literally trapped in the middle of Sudan's seemingly interminable north-south civil war. Africa's longest ongoing conflict has starved the Nuba of resources, although that isolation now might be coming to an end.

For the first time in a decade, a United Nations team is scheduled to visit the mountains this month to assess the needs of this roughly 20,000-square-mile region blessed with star-spattered night skies and an array of vibrant cultures that thrive on the slopes and bouldered plateaus of small, bushy mountains.

"The number one thing we need is an understanding of the international community of our problem," said Yusif Kuwa Makki, governor of Southern Kordofan Province, which includes the Nuba Mountains.

While international aid agencies have scrambled to stave off a looming famine in southern Sudan, the Nuba have received virtually no relief here in their homeland in the center of the country. The Sudanese government says it is illegal to provide it here.

The Nuba, who number about 2 million, are a conundrum in Sudan, where the mostly Arab and Muslim north — which dominates Sudan's government — has battled the mostly African and Christian south on and off for the past four decades.

Nuba consider themselves northerners — the mountains stand near the geographic center of Africa's largest country — but support the rebel south. In a country paralyzed by ethnic distrust, roughly 50 ethnic groups share the mountains that might have divided them. The Nuba have crafted civilian institutions in a country where authorities are traditionally dictatorial. They are a religiously tolerant people in a country buckled by religious hatred.

"For the government, the Nuba is a very difficult situation," said Peter Adwok, deputy secretary of industry and mining for the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the principal southern rebel group. "They're not going along with the north."

The Nuba's isolation was born of policies that began under British colonial authority and were later revived by Sudan's Arab rulers. The Arabs immersed the Nuba in their culture. Although they are black Africans, the Nuba learned Arabic. They dressed like Arabs. Many became Muslims.

But because they are black, they were regarded as second-class citizens, "human chattel," said Makki, the local governor, who after being affronted as a student in Khartoum realized, he said, that the Arabs had stunted the Nuba's development just as British colonialists had. The region did not have a secondary school until the 1970s.

In the latest round of Sudan's civil conflict, the Nuba fought on the side of the rebels. Khartoum responded by declaring a jihad, or holy war, against the region. Hoping to cause the people to panic and leave the land, the army conducts annual campaigns of burning and looting the Nuba's livestock and grain stores.

The hardship has forced hundreds of thousands of Nuba out of the mountains. Many have fled to Khartoum, others to the south. Thousands have rushed to government camps for promised safety and food. Human rights activists allege that families are separated, and men and women routinely tortured, in these "peace camps."

Thousands of those left behind have had to abandon fertile valleys for unfamiliar, rocky hillsides that yield much less grain. Many have lost all of their livestock.

Musa Albanda, whose village was attacked by the government 15 months ago, said that for a time some villagers survived by sneaking down from the hills at night for water and fruit. Then the government caught on and planted land mines. "We need some relief because we don't have enough to eat, and we don't want to go back to the Arab," Albanda said.

The Nuba are a small minority of Sudan's hungry. In the south, aid workers scrambled this spring to try to avert full-scale famine among at least 350,000 in war-ravaged Bahr el Ghazal Province.

The Nuba received food aid for the first time last month. International relief groups delivered 13,000 pounds of sorghum to an airstrip near Makki's mountaintop redoubt. It was enough to feed about 100 people for one month.

Much more might follow the U.N.'s assessment this month, but the governor is concerned about how it will arrive. Makki said food aid will be refused unless it is funneled through a U.N. airstrip in Kenya and not through the government.

"We do not trust the Sudanese government," Makki said. Khartoum "will do all the tricks to delay what comes in."

Asia's Economic Woes Pose Global Threat

Paul Blustein

THE ASIAN economic flu is no longer afflicting the region's Little Tigers alone, and it's looking a lot scarier as a result. Until recently, the financial crisis that started in Thailand last summer and spread to Indonesia and South Korea was striking only at countries with relatively small economies. But now, much more important nations are coming under financial strain — and the risks to the global economy are rising commensurately.

In Japan, the yen and the stock market have gone into a tailspin recently amid a slew of bad news capped by a government report confirming that a recession is under way.

In China, fears are mounting that slowing economic growth will force the government to devalue the currency in an attempt to make its products cheaper abroad and ring up more export sales. Fears that that was about to happen helped send currencies and stock prices tumbling in developing countries all over the world that compete with cheap Chinese products.

"Of course the risk is increasing," said Rudiger Dornbusch, a professor of international economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who spelled out how a disaster might unfold: "In Japan, the stock market crashes. Competitive [currency] depreciation spreads from Asia around the world. There is suspension of debt payments by every emerging market economy. Overpriced stocks dive. And everybody says, 'I knew that was going to happen!' — and they start saving furiously." When consumers save, they deny the economy the stimulus that their spending would give it.

Japan's economy is more than 1½ times the combined size of its Asian neighbors' economies, and Tokyo is either the No. 1 or No. 2 trading partner of most Asian nations, including China, Malaysia, South Korea and the Philippines. The reluctance of Japanese consumers and businesses to spend has already hit imports from those countries hard. Indeed, as Japan's currency sinks, it is looming as a stiffer competitor to those economies, increasing the likelihood that their recessions will be deep and prolonged.

That poses a competitive threat to U.S. industries; Japanese vehicle exports to the United States, for instance, are up nearly 7 percent over the past year. For struggling firms in countries such as Korea and Taiwan, the problem is even worse.

The good news is that Japan presents virtually no danger of running out of money to pay its foreign debts, as Korea and Thailand did, because Tokyo holds the world's largest hoard of U.S. dollars and other foreign currencies, totaling more than $200 billion.

But what makes Japan's downturn even more worrisome is the danger that its falling stock market, which has lost more than a quarter of its value over the past year, will trigger a broader financial implosion. Japanese banks, unlike banks in most countries, hold huge portfolios of stock as a major part of their cushions of capital, and the lower the depths that the Tokyo market's Nikkei stock index plumbs, the weaker they get.

"This is what we call the Japanese death spiral," said Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics. "As the Nikkei goes down, it reduces the capital base of the banks." Then, as banks cut back lending to firms, "businesses fail — which causes stocks to fall, and things spiral down."

All this is prompting Asian officials to become increasingly outspoken in urging Tokyo to embrace a bolder approach.

Many experts concur that China and Hong Kong will resist pressure to devalue. But even assuming such meltdown scenarios are avoided, at the very least, the outlook for the expansion of the world economy is rapidly dimming, said William Cline, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, an organization of banks and securities firms that invest in emerging markets.

"With East Asian countries looking like they'll turn in negative growth rates in the range of 5 to up to 20 percent, and Japan now going into recession, a slowdown in global growth is very much in the offing," he said.

Moses May Not Be Able to Stem the Tide

COMMENT
E. J. Dionne

IF THE National Rifle Association is looking to be led out of the wilderness, who better to do it than Moses, which is to say their recently installed president, Charlton Heston. "When you hear the voice of Moses speak," declared Oliver North, a member of the NRA board, "you know people are going to pay attention."

It's good enough that Heston played Moses only in the movies since the gun control debate in the United States is largely about enacting political drama. The NRA has turned gun control into a cultural issue: anybody who favors gun regulations, even the narrowest and most reasonable, is cast as a soft-headed liberal city slicker prepared to ride roughshod over the constitutional rights of honest gun owners.

The NRA, once primarily concerned with teaching gun safety, has turned itself into a political interest group. You could just feel President Clinton's poll ratings take a bump upward when Heston declared: "Mr Clinton, America didn't trust you with our health care system . . . America doesn't trust you with our 21-year-old daughters, and we sure, Lord, don't trust you with our guns!"

As it happens, one issue on which most Americans trust Clinton is gun control. Poll after poll has shown that voters view gun restrictions as he does — practical anti-crime remedies, not theological matters.

This position has great appeal among middle-class suburban voters — one reason why Clinton did far better than the average Democrat among suburbanites in 1996. The more the NRA makes gun control a cultural issue, the more it pushes away Americans who live in the largest cultural belt in the country: the vast stretch of suburbs.

The NRA's real problem is not with Clinton, but with its putative Republican allies. They have looked at the same election returns as Clinton has. They're concluding that the party's captivity to interest groups strong in parts of the South and mountain West is hurting its prospects everywhere else.

If Heston wants to see what he's up against, he should read an article by conservative writer Christopher Caldwell in the current Atlantic Monthly. Caldwell warns of "The Southern Captivity of the GOP" and says things about guns and the NRA many Democrats would fear to utter.

Caldwell declares: "Rabidly pro-gun rhetoric has succeeded in putting the Democrats on the side of the cops and crime control, Republicans on the side of criminals and crime."

Remember, Caldwell is a conservative and a senior writer for The Weekly Standard. Imagine a writer for the Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, supporting birth control, and you get a sense of the heresy being let loose in Republican ranks.

Heston's job is to change the image of the NRA and battle the organization's negative public standing, bred, he thinks, by hostile media. But he won't pull off the make-over with statements declaring that the recent school shootings are "a child issue, not a gun issue."

There was a rote quality to the national debates following the killings in Springfield, Oregon, and Jonesboro, Arkansas. One side blamed the culture of guns, the other family breakdown, and the twain never met.

It is clear, as Education Secretary Richard Riley said last week, that preventing such incidents requires attention to a range of issues. Yes, that includes making it harder for kids to get their hands on guns. It also means fighting a cultural tendency to "glorify violence," as Riley put it, and it means school officials being more attentive to the problems of troubled kids.

If Heston wants to fix the NRA's image, his sonorous voice won't be enough. The NRA will have to rethink its absolutism or it will find both parties abandoning its cause.

Top Russia Official on Corruption Charge

David Hoffman in Moscow

IN WHAT officials called the highest-level arrest in a corruption case in the post-Soviet era, the head of Russia's national statistics agency has been accused of fixing data to help firms avoid taxes and selling confidential information about businesses to their competitors, officials announced last week.

Yuri Yurkov, head of the State Statistics Committee (Goskomstat), which provides policymakers with data about the economy, was taken into custody along with several deputies. Authorities said they found more than $1 million in cash as well as jewelry in a search of Yurkov's apartment. Yurkov was the head of an organized ring that distorted records and sold information from the agency over the past four years, they added.

"Because of the importance of his agency, Yurkov was ranked as equal to a [Cabinet] minister," said Alexei K. Volin, chief of the Russian government information department.

If the charges are true, it could mean that key information about Russian industries and tax collection has been skewed. In theory, the distortions could affect a whole range of assumptions about such things as car imports, personal income and the health of key sectors of the economy. But some experts said the precision of Goskomstat reports was already in doubt.

Critics had charged last year that the agency fudged annual growth statistics by enlarging its assumptions about the shadow economy for 1997, but not for the preceding year. The adjustment wrongly suggested Russia's long depression was coming to an end and that growth had begun, the critics said.

The unusual case comes at a moment of fragility and uncertainty in the Russian financial markets, which have been hit in recent weeks with a wave of investor flight and panic.

Hardcovers

Nonfiction

The Muhammad Ali Reader Edited by Gerald Early (Ecco, $26).

CERTAIN facts about Muhammad Ali are well known and beyond dispute. That he ranks among the finest athletes of the 20th century, for instance, and his incontestable status as one of the most famous Americans of his time. Early, who has written frequently about boxing, attempts here to go beyond commonly held information and present a multifaceted portrait of the man known throughout the world as The Greatest. The editor has collected four decades of articles, essays and interviews produced by such articulate Ali-watchers as Amiri Baraka, Joyce Carol Oates and Wole Soyinka.

Through an Open Door: Selections from the Robert A. Hefner III Collection of Contemporary Chinese Oil Paintings (Portfolio Editions, distributed by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, $55; paperback, $45).

IN 1985, American businessman Robert A. Hefner III, traveling in China, was reminded of the Renaissance and the turn of the 19th century, both periods of major developments in the arts. He began to seek out contemporary Chinese artists, and found a large group who had decided to confront the age-old norms of Chinese painting, working in oils and taking up subjects once forbidden to them by politics and tradition. He presents 54 paintings from Hefner's collection, along with photographs of the artists and brief commentaries on each painter's vision.

The Official Three Stooges Encyclopedia, By Robert Kurson (Contemporary Books, $29.95).

BY COMPARISON to the Three Stooges, certainly the most boorish and juvenile screen act of common memory, Abbot and Costello were sophisticated highbrows, and Groucho Marx an atomic scientist. Larry, Curly and Moe raised childish pratfalls and gags, not to mention eye-poking, to a level geared precisely to the mentality of a six-year-old. Nevertheless, once seen they are never forgotten — and with this book in hand they become well-nigh unforgettable. Kurson, with a zeal worthy of the true Stooge fanatic, offers biographies of the guys, summaries of all the films, and an A to Z of notable catchphrases, events, slogans and names used in the various misadventures.

Francis Bacon, By Perez Zagorin (Princeton, $29.95).

IN RECENT years Francis Bacon (1561-1626) has been receiving renewed historical and critical attention: A brilliant philosopher, an amateur scientist, an austere essayist, a likely homosexual, a Machiavellian politician, and a back-stabbing lawyer — he seems to have been all these and more. In this handsome book Perez Zagorin offers a brief precis of the life, followed by a unified discussion and examination of Bacon's work, achievements and characteristics as a thinker and philosopher both with respect to science and in the other areas to which he devoted himself. A book not just to taste but to chew and digest.



ILLUSTRATION: JILL KARLA SCHWARZ

Bitten by Perfection

Guy Amirthanayagam

THE SNAKE CHARMER
By Sanjay Nigam
Morrow. 223pp. $22

OF THE new stars that have been spotted in the literary firmament of Indian writers in English, the two most visible are Arundhati Roy and Vikram Chandra. Roy has already won the Booker Prize with her first novel, The God Of Small Things. Chandra's debut novel, Red Earth And Pouring Rain, won distinguished awards and has now been succeeded by his second, Love And Longing In Bombay, which will no doubt receive critical accolades in days to come.

Sanjay Nigam's The Snake Charmer bids fair to join this select company. Of course, there are differences between individual kinds of creative talent. Nigam does not have Roy's linguistic fecundity, comparable only to G.V. Desani's or Salman Rushdie's. Nor does Nigam have the skills of Chandra, who is almost a conjurer in manipulating situation and plot.

Nigam's style is sparer but not for that reason less intense or less effective. The story partly is an allegory, but it is not fantastic. Because he is not given to verbal pyrotechnics or to adventitious tricks of style, he does not build barriers between himself and his reading public. His novel centers on Sonalal, a successful snake charmer who wants to be the best in the world. It is about the relationship between him and his snake, Raju, whom he loves more than a father loves his son. But he is martinet enough to drive the snake to the extremes of exhaustion. He wants the gods to appreciate Raju's dance and to enjoy the music he plays on his been, a musical instrument made of a dried, disemboweled pumpkin.

One of the themes of the book is the quest for perfection. Sonalal, a protagonist so faceless that even his wife has difficulty identifying him in a crowd ("which now and then proved quite convenient"), has a special need for eclat, for exceptional excellence in his vocation. The man-snake relationship is firmly set against a background of family and friends, some genuine, some charlatan.

One of the more moving subplots is Sonalal's love for the prostitute Reena, his devoted mistress, who tries hard to cure him of impotence. She succeeds, she is his lifeline; humane, devoted and patient, she gives him back his manhood. Apart from Reena, he has a good friend in an older snake charmer, Jagai, who stresses the centrality of everyday life to creative achievement, and the importance of what we see as mere distractions:

"The distractions you speak of," he says, "are life itself. The reason you are the best charmer I've ever heard is because your music makes me feel that living and everything that goes with it, the things you call distractions — wives and children, coughs and colds, liquor and beedies, lotteries, hot boring days, charming its — are important in some way."

But the main preoccupation — what gives the story its momentum — is the protagonist's sense of guilt. Early in the story, exasperated by Raju's refusal to cooperate and provoked because the animal bites him, Sonalal does the unthinkable: he bites his beloved snake in half. From then on, his forehead bears the mark of Cain. Sonalal's life becomes a stony pathway toward the expiation of his guilt.

Midway through the novel Sonalal consults a blind magician, Ratan the Great, reputed to have performed the Indian rope trick. It is Ratan who tells him of the most potent symbols in the story: the cosmic ether that must be sniffed and the ripe mango that must be eaten to know perfection. Both are evoked at the book's end: "The sky seemed part of a perfection that could never be known by a man. And yet. He, Sonalal, had once known it. On a day that suddenly felt like yesterday, he had caught a faint whiff of the ether that flows through the universe. Still staring at the sky, he thought the ether must be blue, and way high up there, it smelled like freshly cut mango."

In Sonalal, Nigam has been able to create a convincing character who, though lowly and of low caste, is able to aspire toward perfection and at least once in his life senses it.

An Amorous Alphabet

Steven Moore

LOVES THAT BIND
By Julian Rios
Translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman
Knopf. 244pp. $23

PITY the woman who loves a bibliophile: In addition to competing with former girlfriends or wives, she is up against all the heroines of literature. A man who loves novels often loves their leading ladies, and may even be foolish enough to choose a woman because she reminds him of a literary character or at least a metaphor ("eyes like drenched violets"). A man who confuses his love of books with his love of women is asking for trouble; on the other hand, it can beget a wonderful book like Loves That Bind.

Spanish writer Julian Rios in his third novel to be published in English has found the perfect form to express literary love. Having been left by his jealous girlfriend, Babelle, a painter named Emil Alia decides to search for her throughout London, pausing to write her 26 confessional letters about the previous women in his life, in alphabetical order. Though none of them is named, each resembles a female character from modern literature, challenging the reader to guess her identity. Assisting the game reader is Emil's adoption of the style and substance of the writers who created these figures. The first chapter is easy: A is for Albertine, the bisexual flirt of Proust's In Search Of Lost Time. Some are equally easy to identify — D is for Daisy (The Great Gatsby), L is for Lolita, and O is for Woolf's Orlando (the source of the ocular metaphor above) — while others are not so easy. Unless you've read Celine's London Bridge, Arno Schmidt's Lake Scenery With Pocahontas, and Malcolm Lowry's Under The Volcano, you won't be able to recognize the titular heroines of chapters V, P and Y, respectively.

I'm proud to say I was able to identify all but six of the 26 characters, though I had to spend an hour in a bookstore confirming some hunches. Rios usually drops hints to the titles of the books he's parodying: For example, in the chapter for X, I had no idea who the referent could be until he used the phrase "the blue of noon in his demonic eyes." I remembered that the French writer Georges Bataille had written a novel called Blue Of Noon (1957), and when I consulted it, there she was: Xenie. When Loves That Bind was first published in Spain in 1995, Rios's publisher sponsored a competition to see how many readers could identify all 26 heroines. Only four readers got them all.

Loves That Bind is more than a literary version of Trivial Pursuit, however. Rios is exploring the varieties of amorous experience in modern literature. These range from the vampiric (G is for Grace Brissenden, from James's The Sacred Fount to the pedophilic Lolita and London Bridge) to the masochistic (W is for Wanda, from Sacher-Masoch's Venus In Furs, the only non-20th-century work I could identify). In between are the more common stages of love affairs, from unrequited love (The Great Gatsby) and deception (F is for Florence, from Ford's The Good Soldier) to bemusement (S is for Sally Bowles, from Isherwood's Goodbye To Berlin) to spirited fun (Z is for — who else? — Queneau's Zazie In The Metro). Even if you don't have much of a literary background, you will be fascinated by this gallery of women and the ways they pursue their sense of the erotic.

But it is as a literary tour de force that most readers will be entranced by this book-length love letter to modern literature. Alphabetically structured works of fiction have appeared from time to time — Walter Abish's Alphabetical Africa, Karen Elizabeth Gordon's The Red Shoes, Gilbert Sorrentino's Splendide-Hotel — but rarely with such delightful results. A cunning linguist, Rios puns in several tongues in the manner of his forbears — Lewis Carroll, Nabokov, Schmidt, and above all the Joyce of Finnegans Wake — and indulges in all kinds of wordplay, imaginatively re-created in Edith Grossman's translation.

For example, the Proustian narrator of the first chapter tells Albertine "of my aversion to the sophistries of sapphism. But she could also adopt an angelic air (was the seraphic pose easier for her than the sapphic?)." The Spanish subtitle for the book is Belles Lettres, and Rios celebrates every meaning of the phrase: These are beautiful letters about the belles of modern belles lettres. It was Emil's love of letters that drove Babelle away, not any actual indiscretions: The loves that bind him are bound in books. Does he eventually find her? Does she read these letters? You'll want to know.

Emil and Babelle are also the immensely appealing protagonists of Rios's two previous novels: Larva appeared here in 1990, and Poundemonium in 1997. Both are stunning achievements, albeit challenging to read because of their Joycean density of language, and should have established Rios here as the world-class belletrist he clearly is. The more accessible Loves That Bind should be the one to win for Rios the large audience he so richly deserves.

Whom haven't I named? B is for Bonadea (Robert Musil's The Man Without Qualities), H for Hermine (Hermann Hesse's Steppenwolf), J for Julia (Jean Rhys's After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie), M for Molly (Joyce's Ulysses), N for Nadja (Andre Breton), Q for Quentin (Caddy's daughter in William Faulkner's The Sound And The Fury), and R for Robin (Djuna Barnes's Nightwood). I will leave it to you to identify the remaining six.

America's bumper cash crop

An MBA is still a guarantee of a soaraway salary, writes **George Bickerstaffe**

FORGET the stories about the MBA degree being old hat. New Master of Business Administration graduates in the United States are pulling in salaries — at age 25-plus — that others dream about.

"Typically, students are being offered $75,000 in basic salary plus another $45,000 in bonuses — a total median package in their first year [back at work] of $120,000," says Steve Lubrano, director of career services at the Amos Tuck business school, part of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

This pattern is repeated at all the leading business schools across the US. The J L Kellogg graduate school of management at Northwestern University in Evanston, just north of Chicago, reports that last year's graduating MBA class had an average salary of $88,000 (for graduates going into consulting jobs) on a range from $60,000 to $130,000.

The Kenan-Flagler business school at the University of North Carolina also had a record year in 1997. The average basic salary of its graduates jumped 12 per cent over the figure for 1996, to $70,500.

The same thing is happening in Europe, according to Kal Denzel, director of MBA admissions, marketing and career services at IMD business school in Lausanne, Switzerland.

"In the UK, salaries offered by management consultants rose by between 10 per cent and 15 per cent this year on a year ago," she says.

Denzel says leading schools in Europe are increasingly working with the corporate sector to help them increase their attractiveness to students, particularly through increasing basic salaries, adding sign-on bonuses and in some cases offering to pay tuition.

In the US, the large salaries are driven by growth in management consulting, which is attracting more and more new MBA graduates and driving up salaries right across the board.

"This has been driven by the voracious need of the management consultants for MBA talent," says Roxanne Hori, career management director at Kellogg.

Pamela Hamilton, director of MBA recruitment and development at Texas-based Dell Computer, agrees: "Management consultants and investment banks are pushing up MBA salaries, and corporations have to match it. It isn't so much the basic salaries that are rising, but the bonuses. It can end up that basic salary is only 60-70 per cent of the first-year package."

Among Kenan-Flagler students who went into consulting firms in last year (26 per cent of the total) the average salary was nearly $83,000, and bonuses ranged from $3,000 to $32,000.

The consulting firms have entered the MBA market in a big way. At Kellogg, consulting (including posts with public accounting firms) attracted 41 per cent of last year's graduates, compared with 29 per cent in 1993. The top five recruiters at Kellogg this year were all consultants and between them hired 104 graduates from a class of 344. McKinsey alone hired 33 graduates from the business school.

There are a number of reasons for this, according to careers officers. "Of course students are attracted by these salaries," says Lubrano. "Many graduate with significant debt, so they want to pay that off quickly."

But Hori at Kellogg says that is only part of the story. "Consultants need MBAs because there is a high demand for [consultants'] services," she comments, "and also, because they have a high turnover, they need to keep up their recruitment."

The corporate sector has not given up completely on MBA recruitment, of course. The manufacturing industry attracted 36 per cent of Kenan-Flagler's graduate class of 1997, with average salaries of around $65,000 to $70,000, and bonuses ranging from $2,500 to $20,000.

They are also fighting back in other ways. "Everyone is recruiting aggressively and trying to design job offers to meet the needs and expectations of students," says the careers director at Kenan-Flagler, Cheryl Dowdall.

"Corporations are stressing the quality of life they have to offer, compared with the long hours and travel of management consultants. Consulting firms, on the other hand, are trying to minimise the travelling time required by reducing the number of days spent out of town."

In any case, some careers officers caution against too much reaction by the corporate sector. "In 1997 only half of our students accepted their top offer in terms of salary. Job content, industry sector, functional area and location are all more important than salary for a majority," says Lubrano.

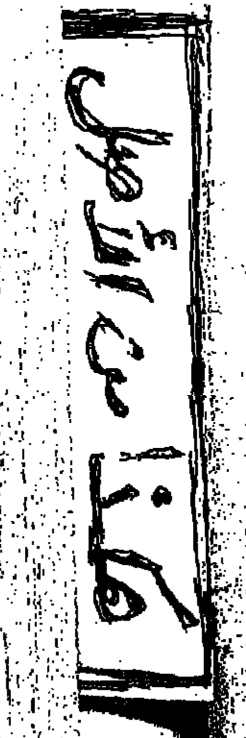
But business schools are concerned that the current boom might deter recruiters, who may not return when the jobs market weakens. There are reports of on-campus visits by recruiters being cancelled because of lack of student interest, and of recruiters being unable to attract the numbers or quality they wanted.

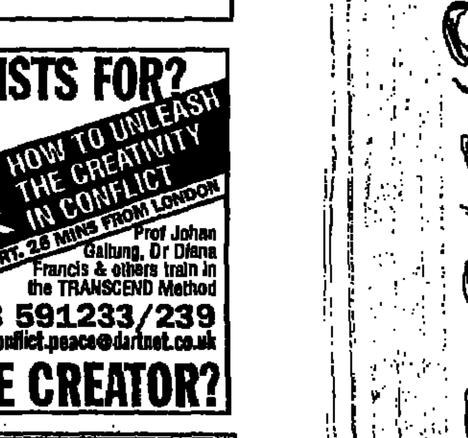
"Because not every company is able to recruit the numbers of students it wants, some do get frustrated," agrees Dowdall. "This is particularly true of traditional recruiters, who may have enjoyed recruiting success in years past."

For MBA students, however, there is little to dull the vista of glittering prizes as they enter the job market. "If ever there was a time to do an MBA, it's now," says one second-year student at Amos Tuck.

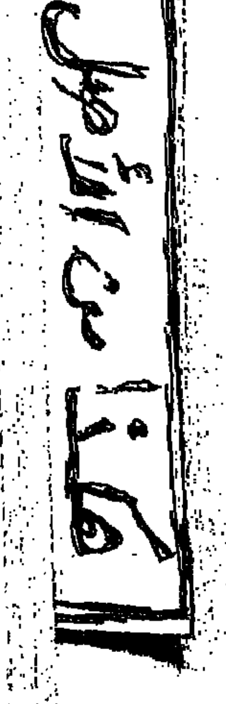
George Bickerstaffe is editor of Which MBA?, and of the Financial Times "Mastering" series

Sitting pretty . . . those graduates with an MBA degree in the US are catapulted into a high-earnings bracket









The stigma of rape humiliates every victim, male and female

Heather Mills

PETE MASON doesn't look like a man to mess with. At 6ft 3in and 250lb, with close-cropped hair and designer stubble, you would never describe him as a "victim". But appearances can be deceptive.

Two years ago he was beaten up and raped by three men in an isolated motorway service station car park in the North of England. Like many victims of male rape, he reported the beating to police, but was too ashamed to admit he had also been buggered.

But when he got home from hospital, he told his wife what had happened. Now he wishes he hadn't.

New research from Oxford university shows that wives and girlfriends are no more understanding or supportive of rape victims than their male counterparts. Preliminary findings from the first comprehensive study of victims of male rape have found that many women blame their partners, and that — just like men — they question whether they invited the attack. Some end the relationship because they feel their partner is no longer a "real man".

Mason's wife, who had been with him for 15 years, is typical of many in the study. She told him: "Pretend it never happened. Don't tell a soul — the public humiliation and people asking questions and sniggering at you will be harder to bear than the pain of the rape itself."

Now they never discuss the attack — except in arguments when his wife uses it to question his masculinity.

Stephanie Chester, who is conducting the research, said: "Women have long campaigned for rape victims to be believed and given unconditional support and reassurance in the aftermath of an attack, but when the tables are turned they do not practise what they preach.

"The reaction of other men — friends, colleagues, family members — can be equally devastating, often disbelieving. Many men claim it could never happen to them — that they would fight off anyone who dared violate them and that they would rather die than be raped."

Mason, aged 42, thought he was going to die. The rape happened as he pulled into a car park on the M6 motorway. He saw a white car behind him, flashing its lights. "I pulled over, thinking something was wrong with my van. I walked towards where the car had parked. The driver and a passenger got out. Then another man got out of the back of the car and hit me around the head.

"It happened so quick. I was stunned. Then they started punching and hitting me. One got hold of me, the others were hitting and kicking me between the legs. I saw the blood on my shirt and started to get very scared.

"They dragged me into the back of my own van. Two held me down — one with a boot forcing my face into the floor — and the third one raped me. I cannot remember a word that was said. But I can remember every detail of that man's face."



Pete Mason: 'I've lost the original me. A weak substitute has taken my place' PHOTOGRAPH: ANTON GOUWS

Mason was taken by ambulance to hospital with cuts and bruises covering his body. There were no broken bones, but the psychological effect has been devastating. A previously outgoing man who enjoyed a drink in the pub with his mates, he has become semi-reclusive. Like many unhappy women, he has taken to comfort eating. His sex life has been ruined.

Shame and embarrassment prevented him telling the police about the rape, and his wife's reaction compounded his fears.

His eyes well with tears as he talks of the impact on his family. "I've lost the original me. It changed my life. A weak substitute has taken my place. I've got two young sons and I'm worried about not being the big brave dad to sort out all their problems."

The scale of male rape in Britain is unknown. Home Office figures record only 227 cases in 1996. Figures from the Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre show 77 men in the city were sexually assaulted last year. Both statistics, says Chester, represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Most men do not report rapes, believing the police will question their sexual identity, and only a handful of police forces have dedicated, trained male rape officers. Most offer no specialist service. Company director Brian Brown — raped by two men as he took a short cut across London's Hyde Park at night — said he felt an obligation to report the rape, but would not pursue a prosecution for fear of publicity.

So far the Oxford research has found that those at the extreme ends — the wealthy and the homeless — coped best with their ordeal: the wealthy were able to pay for counselling or move house; the homeless were more concerned about day-to-day survival. For the rest, the event has proved deeply damaging. Some have resorted to drink and drugs; others have attempted suicide; some, like Mason, have become withdrawn.

Chester believes society's attitude needs to change. "Psychological recovery involves regaining self-identity as a man, yet it is precisely this identity that has made it so difficult for men to admit, and for society to accept, that men get raped too." — *The Observer*

The names of victims have been changed to protect their identity

Poison timebomb

John Hooper in Seville on the threat to a vital Andalucian migration area as toxic sludge seeps in

A SPILLAGE of toxic waste in one of the most environmentally sensitive areas on earth is threatening the wildlife of two continents. The affected area is the Doñana National Park in Las Marismas, the Andalucian marshlands between Seville and the sea.

The Doñana is more than an exceptional wildlife preserve, a key wintering location for the wild fowl of northern Europe and one of the last refuges of the Iberian lynx and the Iberian imperial eagle: for the park and its surroundings also form the main resting place for birds migrating between Europe and Africa.

Disaster struck in the early hours of April 25 when the retaining wall of a waste reservoir collapsed at a Swedish-Canadian mining plant northwest of Seville. Some 158,000 tonnes of waste containing heavy metals and other toxic material were sent oozing down the River Guadiamar towards the park.

But the event vanished from the headlines, largely because the lethal grey sludge was, for the most part, blocked before reaching the heart of the Doñana. Only 3 per cent of the surface of the national park was covered. But the effects of the disaster are seeping into every aspect of life in Andalucia.

Some effects are relatively small. For example, pilgrims travelling south from Seville in traditional covered wagons or on horseback for this month's annual festival in honour of the Virgin Mary as Reina de las Marismas (Queen of the Marshes) were warned not to take their usual route across the Guadiamar to the town of El Rocio. Instead they had to use the main road to avoid the layer of toxic waste which still coats the banks of the river.

The official body co-ordinating the clean-up estimates that, at the present rate of slightly under 10,000 cubic metres a day, it can remove the last waste from the surface by October 27.

But Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds estimates it could take as much as 25 years for the area to recover. A spokesman said: "We fear this will turn out to be the worst environmental disaster of its kind in Europe this century."

The weight of the toxic material which cascaded out of the Boliden Apirsa plant at Aznalcóllar was almost four times as great as that released in the Exxon Valdez tanker disaster of 1989.

Some experts remain optimistic. José Antonio Valverde, the park's first director, believes "the chances of a wide-ranging disaster are minimal, if everything proceeds as it has done". But he is now in a minority. Spain's notoriously divided environmental pressure groups have joined in a declaration that the situation is much worse than claimed by the regional and national authorities because of the peculiar nature of the crisis, which is brimful of the potential for delayed effects.

"Heavy metals have a feature which is not noticeable at first," says Carlos Vallecillo, a biologist with the Asociación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza (Adena). "They get into the body and act like hormones, causing problems of infertility, growth, sexual and neurological maturity, and even suppressing the immune system. They can also cause certain cancers."

The animals that died as the poisonous acid tide swept down the Guadiamar are likely to make up no more than a fraction of the eventual total. For the toxins have only started to pass up the food chain. The birds that come to the area to live off its abundant fish, and shellfish are particularly at risk.

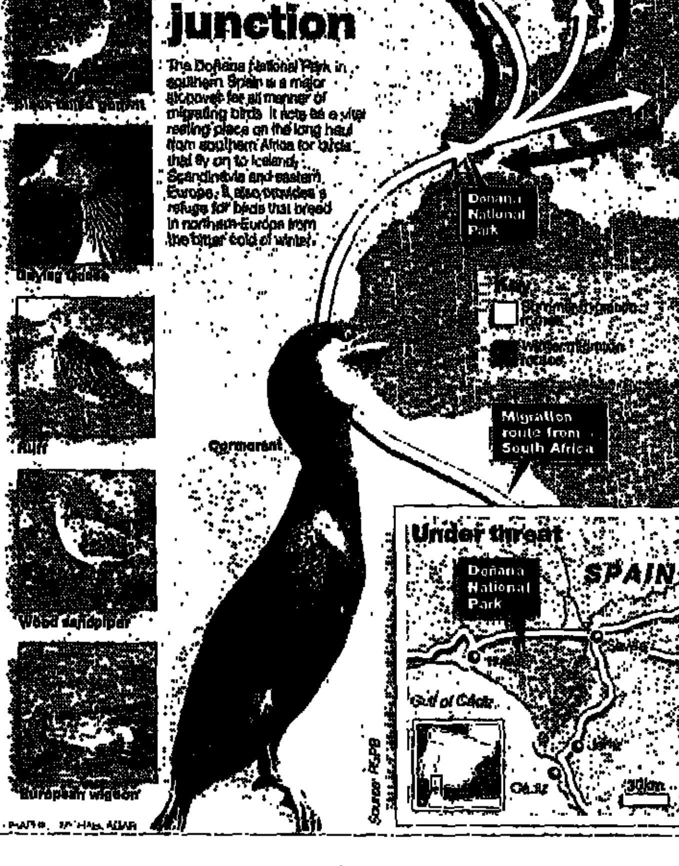
Park records show several species, such as the gull-billed tern and the black-necked grebe, go exclusively or primarily to the very area, just outside the park, where the toxic waste has banked up most thickly. An aerial count two years ago found 54 per cent of the cormorants and 46 per cent of the flamingos in the same area.

Many birds had just left the park to spend the spring and summer in northern Europe when the spillage took place. But, starting probably with the grey heron, they will begin returning in August. And not even the authorities are expecting the mud to have been removed by then.

In the meantime the metals in the mud — zinc, lead, copper and silver — will be seeping into the soil, creating a hidden peril for humans. According to Spain's Young Farmers' Association, some 570 hectares of land which has not been covered in waste is irrigated by systems that draw water from wells feared to have been polluted.

What would turn the disaster into a catastrophe would be if the heavy metals in the waste were to penetrate the aquifer under the park. Aquifer 27, as it is called, is the Doñana's invisible secret. Up to 200m deep, it covers some 5,200 sq km stretching from the River Tinto to the River Guadalquivir.

Initial tests suggest the toxins have not penetrated it. But nobody can be certain. As the head of Spain's Science Research Council, César Nombela, remarked: "The fact that the first analyses indicate that the aquifer has not been polluted does not mean that one day it will not be."



Letter from Ghana

Julie Dalziel

Forest fellers

THE secondary school geography textbook in the school library informs me that I am living in an area of equatorial forest. Forest? I wouldn't say so. But the few awe-inspiring hardwoods, with their huge girths and buttress roots towering above the surrounding vegetation, show what it must once have been like.

Life is peaceful here on our rural boarding school compound. No electricity, no blaring radio or raucous TV. It is a 40-minute drive down a potholed dirt-track to the nearest town. Few vehicles pass through. Apart from our exuberant students yelling on the sports field, the only human sounds are periodic blasts from chainsaw operators and, two or three times a week, the laboured roar of a timber truck straddling the road en route to the yard.

In church on Sunday, a small group as usual stand up to speak during the testimony period. One stooping elderly woman relates how she went in the week to tend her small cassava plot, only to find the plants uprooted and crushed by one of the timber trucks forcing its way through to load a newly-felled tree on the other side. She fetched her grandson to help her protest. It was a mistake. They seized the young man, threatened to kill him and brandished their machetes. The woman watched trembling as they proceeded to beat up her grandson — but at least it was only with the flat of the machete.

It is the inter-schools sports competition in town. We pass the timber company yards on our way to the sports ground. We teachers sit around a table in the "Station Stopover Drinking Spot", enjoying Guinness Malt and Coke, while our students prepare for their football match. I ask my colleagues what the local people think about these non-Ghanaian companies coming in to profit from Ghanaian timber. The group reflects. "They've been here a long time now. Maybe people were uneasy at first, but then there were jobs . . . they had no choice."

"What jobs?" scoffs the agriculture teacher. "It's backbreaking and dangerous, and brings home a pittance. I would never do it."

The geography master drily comments: "The top men are paid very high salaries. The ordinary workers aim for these, so there's no incentive to protest. The people at the bottom take their 5,000 cedis [just over $2] a month and make do because they're allowed to sell surplus timber for firewood in the evenings after work."

Meanwhile at school there is a problem. The students' dormitory beds are falling apart and have to be replaced. Not enough money in the school accounts to do it, and our new students will be arriving soon. We decide to contact one of the timber companies for assistance. Politely, the foreman tells us that, no, they cannot supply boards for free. They could, however, sell them to us at a specially reduced rate — we are a local school and the timber company aims to support organisations which help to better the lot of the local population. It seems that we also have no choice. But perhaps the price is higher than it appears.

Notes & Queries

A RADIO pundit recently forecast that the advent of global companies and global communications would, in time, lead to 20 per cent of the world population being employed and the rest living in poverty. Is his prediction realistic?

WELL, probably 80 per cent of the world's population are already living in conditions of poverty, at least from the perspective of many readers of the Guardian Weekly. The only difference is that now most of those 80 per cent work like dogs just to survive. The prospect that someday only the "upper" 20 per cent will be employed must be quite a comfort to them. My question is, how will they utilise their leisure time? — *Erik Moeser, Port Washington, WI, USA*

EVERY biography of Michael Faraday says that he was a Sandemanian. What do or did Sandemanians believe?

THERE is no truth whatsoever in the story that Faraday was suspended by his church for fulfilling a lunch date with Queen Victoria (Notes & Queries, May 31). Faraday was suspended for some obscure religious argument; court records show that he did not have lunch with the Queen — not on a Sunday or, indeed, any other day. — *John Gribbin (author, Faraday In 90 Minutes), Brighton, East Sussex*

WHAT is the origin of the expression "jay walker"?

IN 19th century New York City, visiting country folk were known as "jays," short for "blue jays". Wandering about town they crossed our busy streets like country roads — when and wherever the mood took them. The exasperated carters and coachmen dubbed them "jay walkers." (So many surviving jay walkers settled in Brooklyn that trolleys were constructed to ferry them about).

Soon there were so many trolleys that Brooklynites attempting to cross their streets became known as "Trolley Dodgers", which explains the name of the baseball team currently playing for Los Angeles. — *Justin Scott, New York City, USA*

WHEN was food first preserved in tin cans?

THE first patented can-opener wasn't invented until 1858, when Ezra J Warner, of Connecticut, USA, developed his device, which was based on the combined principles of the bayonet and the sickle.

Until that point, people had used household tools to open their cans at meal-times. As an example, on an 1824 expedition to the Arctic the explorer Sir William Parry took a can of veal bearing the legend: "Cut round on the top with a chisel and hammer". And hungry British soldiers, when first faced with the new cans in 1812, resorted to using their weapons to prise open the metal containers.

If the men failed with their bayonets or knives, they resorted to shooting at the cans with their rifles. — *Karen Smith, Burnage, Manchester*

WHY does the devil have cloven hooves in Britain, but only one horse's hoof in Germany?

ST DUNSTAN was a blacksmith (and farrier it seems) and had the useful ability to take the legs off horses while he put new shoes on them.

On noticing that the feet of one of his customers had cloven hooves instead of toes, he quickly nailed the devil's leg to the door, complete with horseshoe. The devil managed to escape, leaving the horseshoe on the door. As a result, he won't go into a house with a horseshoe on the door. There is an interesting series of medieval paintings housed in Zurich museum depicting some of this story, although unfortunately no explanation in English is available. — *Jonathan Puddifoot, Cambodia*

Any answers?

ARE there any facilities for recycling the ever-increasing number of CD-Roms coming in the post, offering free Internet server trials? Or does anyone have any bright ideas as to what can be done with them? — ***Cathi Martin, Whitstable, Kent***

ALMOST everything people eat in Britain seems to come originally from elsewhere (potatoes from South America, wheat from Asia, and so on). What did people eat before these arrived? — ***Jeremy Miles, Derby***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
June 21 1998

Masters of all they survey

Paul Evans

THE stage is set for a very strange drama. Inside a village hall on the outskirts of Telford, a growing Midlands town, the tables and chairs mark out battle lines. On one side sit the QC and his posse of City lawyers. Opposite them sit a less advanced variety of the same species representing the local authority. At the top table, between the legal eagles, sits the inspector. His job is to adjudicate, weigh up the evidence and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, the environment minister.

To the inspector's right is the hot seat where expert witnesses give evidence and are cross-examined. Towards the back of the hall sit a team of local people who represent an action group. Behind them the public shuffle uneasily in plastic chairs, many of them elderly, all of them worried about what seems like the inevitable — a damn great hole in the ground for open-cast coal mining on their doorsteps. This is a public inquiry.

Up and down the country there may be dozens of such dramas going on at any one time. They may concern open-cast coal, quarries, new roads, new retail parks, housing developments and a host of other countryside-gobbling activities. With their impenetrable logic and arcane language of subsection this, of document that, they have become a ritualised combat. To an outsider, that is most of us, they are conducted with bizarre Masonic etiquette and deference. But their consequences can have a profound effect on the lives of local people, landscapes and wildlife.

This particular inquiry, Dawley 11, is about proposals from Britain's largest mining company to open-cast an area of fields adjoining woodland. The company claims it will restore the site, plant trees and create habitats for a "community forest" which will be an improvement on the landscape before it was dug up.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

The effect of open-cast mining is devastating to local people, wildlife and landscapes. No amount of tree planting, however generous, can compensate for the loss of wilder places with a much broader complement of plants and animals, and a much more varied and authentic landscape experience. No amount of landscape architecture, however competent, can create the diversity and complexity that nature can unaided.

The people, wildlife and landscapes of this area have lived with environmental upheaval for centuries. This is surely not an argument for them to continue to do so. On the contrary, the urbanisation of the district places an even greater value on the remaining bits of wild space. A community looks to the restorative qualities of its natural environment as a way of defining its sense of place.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it. I'm in the hot seat, trying to support the local action group and stand up for the local wildlife — not that I expect my evidence to be taken too seriously by the inquiry. The mining company's QC and his team have vast resources. I've watched the barrister pick apart the opposition's argument like a bully pulling the wings off a fly.

By comparison, the effort of the beleaguered action group opposing them is heroic. They have no money, few expert witnesses and little time to prepare the case. It's hardly democratic but we make our stand. Time, inspectors and government ministers, will tell.

Chess Leonard Barden

MADRID last month was Vishy Anand's fifth tournament victory in a row, following Belgrade, Groningen, Wijk aan Zee and Linares. The Indian's Fide world rating is within a whisker of 2,800 points, a level of overall performance which only Garry Kasparov has previously achieved. An international poll of journalists recently awarded Anand the Chess Oscar as the player of 1997.

Anand's fervent supporters, who include both UK chess magazines, John Nunn in his Anand games collection, and most of our leading GMs and chess journalists, believe that the Indian is catching Kasparov fast and can soon mount a new title challenge.

But Anand has been a victim of nervous tension at the highest level several times in his career, and that's something which his fans, dazzled by his warm personality, his good sportsmanship and his Anglophilia, rarely discuss.

Anand himself described it graphically when he admitted the weakness in a remarkable New In Chess interview early this year: "It pops up at bad moments, typically when your brain is tired. When I started making these incredibly bad moves, I just had the feeling I must stop. Take a breath, go get a coffee and calm down." Yet the Anand who won Madrid and has conceded only three defeats in five tournaments can look every inch a champion, and this game is a model of systematic attack.

Vishy Anand v Julio Zuniga

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Ba6 5 b3 d5 6 Bg2 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Bd6?! Bxd2+ or Be7 is simpler.

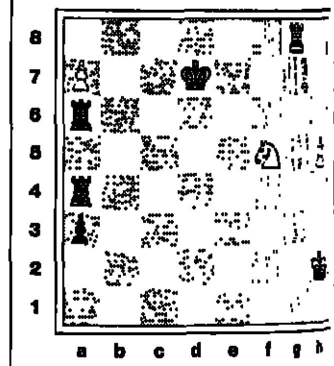
8 Nc3 c6 9 0-0 0-0 10 e4 Nxe4 11 Nxe4 dxe4 12 Ng5 Be7 13 Nxe4 Nd7 14 Bf4 Nf6 15 Qc2 Black's mistake at move 7 cost just one tempo, but that is significant in this type of position. White enjoys an active pawn and piece centre, while Black's problem a6 bishop is blocked in and never moves for the rest of the game.

Rc8 16 Rfd1 h6 17 a4 Nxe4 **18 Bxe4 Bf6 19 Be5 Qe7** 20 a5 **b5 21 c5 Rfd8 22 b4** Rd7 23 **Ra3 Qd8 24 Rdd3 Be7** 25 Qd1 **Bf8 26 g4 Rd5** After cementing the a6 bishop, White uses his extra space and well deployed army to launch a K-side attack, hence this desperate throw. If now 27 Bxd5 Qxd5 the BQ is a light-square nuisance, so Anand diverts the queen while opening up files for his final attack.

27 h4! Qxh4 28 Bxd5 cxd5 **29 g5! Qxg5+ 30 Rg3** Qf5 31 **Raf3 Qh7 32 Qe2 g5** 33 Bf6 **Qb1+ 34 Kh2 Qe4 35** Qd2 Bg7 **36 Bxg5!** A sacrifice which has been in the air for several moves.

hxg5 37 Qxg5 Qh7+ 38 Kg2 **Re8 39 Qf6 Resigns.** For if Rf8 40 Rxg7+ Qxg7 41 Rg3 wins. This lucid, instructive game will repay study.

No 2528



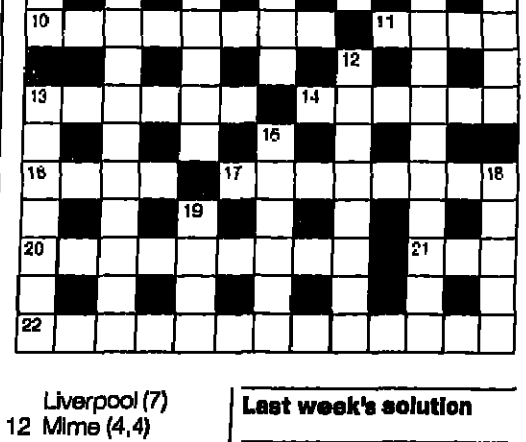
White to move and draw. This finish to an endgame by Dragoljub Djaja looks impossible to solve, and has frustrated grandmasters. White has only knight and pawn for rook and the obvious 1 Rg1 a2 2 Ra1 Rb[illegible] is hopeless. If 1 Rg7+ Ke6 attacks the knight so that White quickly runs out of checks. The true answer is only two moves deep, but can be visually difficult.

No 2527: 1 Qb5+ Qg5 2 Qe2+ Qg4 3 Qe5+ Qg5 4 Qe6! Qg2 5 Qf5+ Qg4 6 Qf3+ Qg4 7 Qf7+ Kg5 8 f4+! Qxf4 Qg6 mate.

Quick crossword no. 423

Across

1 Very disappointed (4,2,1,6)
8 Hostelry (3)
9 Type of fur (6,3)
10 Foliage (8)
11 Genuine (4)
13 Lodging for students etc (6)
14 Bavarian city (6)
16 Idle (4)
17 Cut of meat (4,4)
20 Acetylene lamp (9)
21 Large deer (3)
22 Marking time when bathing (8,5)



Down

1 Change in voting (5)
2 Discussion group (13)
3 One who isn't there (8)
4 Attract(ion) (6)
5 Old (4)
6 Thorough redecoration (13)
7 District of Liverpool (7)
12 Mime (4,4)
13 Large fish (7)
15 Benefactor or customer (6)
18 Card game — for the fireside? (5)
19 Breeding establishment (4)

Last week's solution

MYOPIC BOUGHT
E L S B L H
ABYSS DESPAIR
G M U E C S I
REPRESS EASEL
E J T N L
CONFIDENT
S O T H S
THORN UNIFORM
A B S T N U A
THEATRE CIGAR
U S O U H M
SLEEPY PRETTY

Bridge Zia Mahmood

NOT many of the top bridge partnerships are mixed couples, but Dorothy Hayden and B J Becker who played in the 1950s and 1960s were a notable exception. Dorothy, one of the greatest woman players of all time, is now married to Alan Truscott, an Englishman who is the bridge columnist for the New York Times. She was responsible for many wonderful coups at the bridge table, but my favourite hand is one that she never played at all!

North (dummy)
♠ 65
♥ AKJ74
♦ 8
♣ J9653

East
♠ QJ84
♥ Q10853
♦ 64
♣ Q2

Dorothy was troubled by a recurring dream about a hand in which she held Q10853 of a suit sitting over dummy's AKJ74 (above). When the suit was led and the jack played from dummy, it was somehow correct not to play the queen! Of course, when she woke up, she could not remember the hand in the dream, and did not know why it had been right to make this "anti-bridge" play. Determined to exorcise the demon, she constructed this wonderful deal. Look at the hand from East's point of view. This has been the bidding:

South	West	North	East
	2♠	Pass	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

Your partner, whose opening bid of 2♠ showed a weak hand with a six-card spade suit, leads the ace of spades followed by the king. Declarer ruffs, leads a heart to dummy's ace (partner following suit), and plays the eight of diamonds to his jack. Partner pleases you by winning the trick with the queen, and now plays a heart. Declarer calls for dummy's jack. Are you ready?

Of course, you know that you must duck this trick. But can you work out why? Your partner, who has produced the ace-king of spades and the queen of diamonds, won't have any more high cards for his weak opening bid. So, declarer has the ace and king of clubs. You know that declarer has a singleton in both of the major suits, and you know that declarer is about to make the

North
♠ 65
♥ AKJ74
♦ 8
♣ J9653

West
♠ AK10932
♥ 92
♦ Q75
♣ 108

East
♠ QJ84
♥ Q10853
♦ 64
♣ Q2

South
♠ 7
♥ 6
♦ AKJ10932
♣ AK74

rest of the tricks. When you cover the jack of hearts with the queen South will ruff, draw the rest of the trumps, and claim his contract when your queen of clubs falls on the second round of the suit.

But declarer does not know that the queen of clubs is about to drop. Indeed, he will be afraid that your clubs are ♣Q108. If you don't cover the jack of hearts with the queen — what will declarer do? Of course — he will seize the chance to discard one of his club "losers" on the jack of hearts, and another on the ace. But your partner will ruff the ace of hearts, and that will be the third trick for the defenders.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
June 21 1998



Taxi of the future . . . Guy Nègre's zero-pollution vehicle has attracted worldwide interest

Air today, Mexico City tomorrow

Paul Webster in Brignoles

WITH nothing more than a slight wheeze as the compressed air tap was turned on by the driver, followed by a polite phut-phut from its eco-friendly motor, the bright green car that might change the way we drive in the next century set off for a run outside the workshop in this southern French city.

Its designer, Guy Nègre, who abandoned the Formula One race circuit to build a zero-pollution car, had reason to smile as the vehicle accelerated as smoothly as a petrol-engined version. The demonstration was his first answer to the scores of sceptics who reacted critically when the Guardian Weekly first published the news in February of a compressed-air prototype that could be filled up for a less than $2 and run for 10 hours in urban conditions.

From the pile of correspondence to the editor here is a quote from Graham F Andrews, in Gresham, Oregon, USA, summing up the sceptics' viewpoint. "In his writings on two cultures, C P Snow drew a parallel between liberal arts types who did not know the Second Law of Thermodynamics and technical types who had never read Shakespeare," he wrote. "By this standard your Paul Webster should either go back to school or be demoted to theatre critic."

Apart from the fact that being appointed "theatre" critic should not be considered demotion, I had to check out his theory that it would need several thousand atmospheres to move the vehicle and that pressure would be so high that sitting on the air tank would be like sitting on a bomb. This big bang view is rather important as Mexico plans to mass-produce the vehicle under licence to replace the capital's 87,000 taxis.

Preconceptions about noisy and greasy car factories take a knock on meeting Mr Nègre, whose workshop in this town near the Mediterranean beaches, is as clean as a clinic. White-coated engineers build every component and chassis part for brightly-coloured toy-like taxis that would appeal to Noddy.

Mr Nègre is a down-to-earth, self-taught engine designer. At 58 he is recovering from losing a fortune developing a Formula One motor that ran into opposition from big manufacturers. For this reason he has no plans to take on GM or Ford with a private-car version of the air-driven vehicle.

"There is no point in clashing with the big firms when there are so many specialist slots to be filled," he said, before giving technical details of a motor known as the MDI EV3 C that uses nothing except the air around us. "The air tanks are a special design made in carbon and are 100 percent safe. They contain 300 litres of air at 300 bars and can be refilled in three minutes under high pressure. The car's maximum speed is 100 km/h, and urban autonomy, with full tanks, is 10 hours."

Without taking the compressed air engine apart or sitting in the car for 10 hours while it runs around Mexico City, there is no reason to doubt Mr Nègre's claims, backed up by detailed diagrams that have persuaded 160 backers in Britain and the rest of Europe to take up shares in Motor Development International in Luxembourg, which oversees investment.

For sceptics who want to take the argument further, Mr Nègre hopes to hear from them at CQFD Air Solution, Forum Aurelia, Route du Val, 83170, Brignoles, telephone +33498-051000. E-mail: cqfd.be@infonie.fr

Manners maketh people prosper

Ruaridh Nicoll

GORDON GECKO would have been angry and confused — that is if the fictional broker's eighties ethic of greed had lasted long enough for him to hear about research proving kindness is a key to evolutionary progress.

Martin Nowak, a zoologist from Oxford university, and Karl Sigmund, a mathematician from the University of Vienna, argue in the latest issue of the scientific journal Nature that being mean leads to the evolutionary dead end, while being nice helps boost chances of survival.

"Darwin's theory is based on the idea of competition, which makes it hard to explain co-operation," said Professor Nowak.

Until now this has been explained by "direct reciprocity", or as the professor put it: "If I buy you a pint of beer, I hope you would buy me one back."

For direct reciprocity to work both sides have to be repeatedly in contact so one act of kindness can be repaid by another until the individuals form a "contract" based on helping each other.

But the academics found that random acts of kindness that do not rely on a perceived return could also be beneficial. "We found it can work if you walk into a pub and offer drinks without a hope of being bought a beer."

To reach their conclusions the academics built a community on a computer. Some residents gave unconditionally and others took a more miserly approach. Each individual lost points when they offered help and gained points when they received. While the "givers" initially lost, what they gained in goodwill from the community as a whole benefited them far more in the long run.

The answer, the academics found, is that good deeds beget good deeds. Society sees nice people as worth cultivating.

In an accompanying article ecologist Régis Ferrière, from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, takes the concept further by suggesting that the professors' "indirect reciprocity" could also be relevant to animal and plant communities.

The Arabian babbler was a gregarious bird that seemed "to enjoy helping other babblers" and competed for the status of donor, he said.

Prof Nowak said he believed human society was based on the ability to co-operate. Most co-operation was carried out with an eye on its pay-off.

Whether Mother Teresa was motivated in her ministries by her desire to be well liked is still a subject of hot debate. "Our model doesn't take account of human motivation," said Prof Nowak.

Linda Grant takes on the conspiracy theorists

We're losing the plot

LISTEN closely, because what I'm going to tell you is absolutely true. On the morning of September 1, 1997 I woke up at about 3am and unable to get back to sleep, began to read. I turned on the radio which was playing a Prom. I read for about 45 minutes, the music in the background.

Then an announcement was made. There had been a car crash in Paris. Dodi Al Fayed had been killed, but Princess Diana had walked away from the wreckage with cuts to her legs. I thought two things: a) Di, darling, he wasn't good enough for you, and b) dark, opaque tights from now on. About 20 minutes later there was a further announcement. Diana was dead. From cuts to the legs? What was going on?

Isn't it obvious? Diana did not die in the car crash. The coffin was empty. The island in the middle of the lake at Althorp is a vacant shrine. Longing for freedom and private life, she slipped away from us and is living quietly in the same never-never land as Lord Lucan and Elvis. And don't tell me that the first bulletin was a mistake based on a dodgy eyewitness account because if there's a choice between conspiracy and cock-up, as we are now becoming aware, conspiracy will win out every time.

Because I know Diana is alive, I utterly reject the rival claim that Diana was bumped off by MI5 to prevent her from marrying the Muslim son of a shady character whose Home Office file is so damning that no government has been prepared to grant him citizenship. As for the absurd nonsense that they died because the chauffeur was drunk, Diana and Dodi didn't have their seat-belts fastened and they were escaping from the paparazzi, only a brain-washed idiot would believe it.

Actually, I think that that's exactly what did happen. I experience deep torpor when I hear of the billions of words zooming at the speed of light around the Internet, tapped in by beings for whom the phrase get-a-life should have been invented. The United States is a nation of conspiracy theorists. Now Britain is becoming one too.

What's happening to us? I don't know if there were conspiracy theorists before the assassination of John F Kennedy in 1963, but it was the aftermath of that murder which brought the breed into the full, paranoid flower of its collective madness. Conspiracy theory is a natural consequence of a self-invented country built on the foundations of a philosophy which says that anything is possible, if only you believe. Luckily for the Americans, within a few short years they had Watergate, a conspiracy actually exposed, and since then much of what passes as journalistic activity in the US is devoted by hacks to the hope that they will uncover something just as amazing, for which they will collect their Pulitzer Prize.

Before conspiracy theorists there were harmless cranks such as the vicar in the fifties who proved by mathematics that the sun was cold, or the members of the society who believed that the earth was flat and the moon landings had been faked by the US government to divert attention from the monumental cost of the space programme. These stories seemed terribly funny at the time, fodder for end-of-page paragraphs in the Reader's Digest.

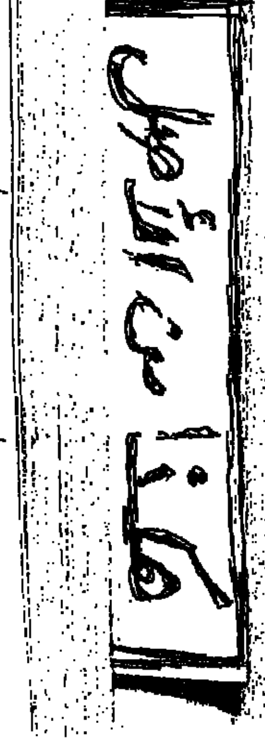
Now we have the X Files, and half the American population (or probably more) believing that aliens landed at Roswell and that their local sheriff was kidnapped for sexual experimentation by beings with three heads and the government knows but it's covering up. Hence the sick satisfaction of Independence Day when the alien abduction theorists are proved right at last.

The conspiracy theory is a product of times in which no one believes any more that governments can really effect any change, that instead of giving us the New Deal or the Welfare State, they are impotent entities, harnessed to economic forces, spinning their wheels in a pathetic display of empty public relations. And if they are doing anything, you can bet that it isn't in our interests. The world, we figure, is really run by secret cabals — bankers, Jews, aliens; forces bigger than us, otherwise why would we feel so powerless? Why would our governments seem so ineffective?

For 40 years, revolutions really were undermined by CIA campaigns and covert operations, but the defeat of popular movements for self-determination were never solely down to the machinations of the quiet Americans, in Graham Greene's defining phrase. I know that just because you're paranoid doesn't mean you're not being followed, but the tendency to see plots everywhere is a means of not looking at ourselves, and our own failures, of always pinning the blame on shadowy forces beyond our control. Conspiracy theories are a form of learned helplessness. Perhaps, too, the conspiracy theory is a yearning for the unified meaning in a time of fragmentation, when none of the big ideas have much currency any more.

SOMEONE called me from Montreal a few days after the car crash to say that he had a friend who had a friend who was "the ambassador to Canada", and he had connections with "high-ranking policemen in Interpol" who had told him that they had been "tipped off to expect a high profile death" a week before Diana was killed. I must tell you that the individual who relayed this information is a professor of philosophy. I said, "Let's run through this again, the French ambassador to Canada said . . ." No, he replied. Not the French ambassador. The Armenian ambassador to Canada. No connections to France, then? No.

"And how do you imagine Interpol cops?" I asked him. "A cross between James Bond and Inspector Morse perhaps? Because as I understand it, Interpol is an office full of pen-pushers shifting files in an office in Brussels, a bit like the Motor Vehicle Licensing Centre." So the mind fills in the carefully exposed blanks, rushes towards imposing a pattern and structure on random bits of information. It's a human urge. Longing for understanding, we hate the idea that there rarely is a point to anything, particularly life. Meanwhile people are dropping dead of starvation in Sudan. No mystery about why that's happening: the usual mixture of climate and corruption, Nothing to write about on the Internet. More's the pity.



Lucian Freud at home with friends

ART
Adrian Searle

SOME New Paintings is the modest, even boring title of Lucian Freud's current exhibition at London's Tate Gallery (until July 26). The show occupies just one room. The walls have been painted grey, and the works are lit only by available daylight, filtering down from the skylight. There are no labels on the walls, and there are none of those annoying information panels that clutter most galleries and generally have the effect of turning the artworks into illustrations. The deadpan presentation of Freud's paintings doesn't seem to put anyone off.

At the press show there were at least 70 people milling about, all getting down to some hard, serious looking, or doing whatever it is that people do in Freud exhibitions. Some come for the brushwork and some come for the angst. Some, the more obviously repressed ones, come for a good long stare at the sallow, painted nakedness, all that bad skin, all that flesh. Some come to pick up strangers, and some come to get a whiff of Freud's life from the things he paints.

One thing many visitors seem to do is chatter, and a lot of the chatter affects an intimacy with the painter's milieu. Oo-err, there's Kate Moss, pregnant. Didn't know Freud had a son called Ali. Look at that dog's balls. Are Bruce's flies undone? Who is Bruce Bernard?

Looking at Freud's paintings, one unavoidably encounters the artist's friends and family, his dogs. The paintings provide a glimpse of the painter's life. But one gains a sort of superficial intimacy, most of all with that room of his in Holland Park in which he paints, and which appears in his paintings time and again, with its patched-plaster walls, the bare, varnished floorboards, the saggy sofas and old leather chairs, the cold fireplace, the ascetic squalor, the London light.

The room that appears again and again in the paintings is more than a setting or a background feature. It is more than ambience. The room is as much a part of the mentality of Freud's paintings as the things that happen in it, the people who come and sit there for hours at a time, who climb in and out of their clothes, put up with the dogs, put up with the painter's demands and all that slow easel-time.


Detail from Lucian Freud's portrait of Gaz — 'like Tom Mix in his hat'

Most of Freud's paintings are made in that room, and the room is in most of the paintings. It is the space he paints in and the space in the paintings. To look at the paintings is also to look into that room, to look into it as though it means something.

Perhaps the painter doesn't particularly care about the room. Perhaps it is the people he paints that matter — them and the painting itself. Freud paints the chairs, the sofa, the patches on the wall, the light reflected on the floor and the window with as much care as he paints his sitters, the light slithering over a greasy forehead, a flaccid penis, a knee, a facial expression, and with just as much concentration as he paints a sleeping dog.

They're there because they're there. What the painter leaves out is another matter. We don't know what it is, but there's so much that seems absent in this painted territory that the absence intrigues us. And maybe we don't need the painter's grandfather to remind us that what is unsaid, left out, glided over or tripped over is probably more important than what is stated or described in ever so much detail, as though to misdirect us.

To look at Freud's paintings is to look into the painter's lair. Perhaps people look into this room in the hope of finding Freud the misfit, the difficult old man, trailed by the rumours, the mythical quarrels, the list of lovers, the gambling, the dining habits. This is the unavoidable backdrop to the paintings, just as much as the painted wall in the painted room.

We imagine we're looking across the room from the painter's side of the easel, seeing the world through Freud's eyes. The painter, of course, sees the painting differently. He knows where it's been, what has come and gone, what's been covered over and scraped off, what bits of it he's made up and what he's left out. He knows about the damp that got in under the sill and ruined the plaster, and when he'll next have to take Pluto to the vet.

People who talk about truth in painting know less than they think.

Not all the paintings here are new. Some appeared in the Freud exhibition at Abbot Hall, Kendal, in 1996; others in Bruce Bernard's big Freud book, published the same year. Some paintings are better than others, some apparently more adventurous or seeming to beg a story or seeming more or less absurd.

Gaz, the jazz piano player, looks like Tom Mix in his hat, but he also looks a bit of a prat in that hat and the jumper and the Yin and Yang badge that Freud has painted all wonky, as wonky as Gaz's smile. And painting his assistant David Dawson twice in the same canvas, the second time as only a pair of legs sticking out from under the table, hints at a private joke or a story. What is that man doing down there?

And what is I.b. reading, in the painting of that title? In an interview with William Feaver, reproduced in the gallery handout, Freud talks about painting someone on a sofa reading Flaubert's letters. Does it matter that it is Flaubert? Would it diminish the painting if it were Wilbur Smith or a Mills and Boon?

These details are perhaps as important, or as unimportant, as the fact that the little portrait of Leigh Bowery is the last that Freud made of his subject. A portrait not just of a bald fat man resting, his head against a cushion, but of a man dying of Aids, a man whose fame was partly of his own making and partly on account of the fact that Freud painted him so often.

And I think we take this all of a piece with the scuffed-up room in the paintings, and the paintings themselves in their glazed frames — their distressed wooden frames with the spattered-on fly droppings and antiqued blacking and gilding — hung on the grey walls of the gallery with the daylight coming in from above, and all these people here in the room with us, all of us looking at Freud's paintings.

It is hard for the paintings to stand alone in all of this. Perhaps they never can. The last time I wrote about Freud, a reader complained about the inadequacies of Freud's drawing, his inability to paint shapes, the lack of "two-dimensional infrastructure" in his work, along with the "incessant portrayal of our uglinesses" and the "appalling surface condition in which he allows the paintings to leave the studio", and much, very much more besides. I laughed out loud and shoved the letter in a drawer, saving it to read out loud in funny voices to friends.

FREUD'S brushwork is sometimes just a kind of hectic filling-in, a dabbled and scrabbled compound overlay of marks, held in place by an intermittent outline. Looking too closely at the brushwork is a bit like looking at pickles in a jar, and it doesn't always construct a credible form. The surfaces bear a surfeit of revisions and superfluous crumbs of heavy lead pigment. But I think of all these things in the same way that I think about the chatter about the artist: they're all just part of the untidy trail of mess we leave in our wake.

Instead, I think about the painter and his room. People come and go, and the furniture moves around, but there doesn't seem to be anywhere else for the painter to go. He slips into the garden, to paint the tangle of buddleia and brambles and bamboo, but it is as impenetrable as the studio wall. The American painter Barnett Newman once said that the "studio is sanctuary", and he was right.

Masterclass in megastardom

POP
Pat Kane

WELCOME to Planet Janet. And believe me, you won't want to leave. This was by several thousand light-years the funkiest, wittiest, hippest mainstream pop show I've seen in a decade. All the other global divas and dons — Madonna and Mariah, George and Bono and, yes, brother Michael too — should get themselves along to their nearest Velvet Rope gig, soonest. For the Jackson sister is putting on what amounts to a masterclass in megastardom.

Lesson one: realise the concept, baby. Jackson's most recent album dwells darkly on the pressures of being a woman and being famous. Now, the Right Honourable Jarvis Cocker has been at the end of a gentle critical kicking recently for indulging in the same kind of celebrity narcissism with This Is Hardcore. But that's the angst of a pale white stringbean from Sheffield who hates his Tory stepfather and watches hotel porn. Big deal.

Janet, however, has been dandled on James Brown's and Marvin Gaye's knees, has one of the most spectacularly dysfunctional families on the planet, and seems to have been genetically re-engineered as sex incarnate. Now, that's what I call pop mythology! And so this gig at Glasgow SECC moves brilliantly through the spattered velour of Janet's psyche — innocence, experience, dominance, passivity, all rendered in a style that mixes Disney and De Sade without a pause.

To begin, a stadium-wide curtain parts to reveal a giant glowing book, flitted over by a Jiminy-Cricket type. Steel-foundry sparks suddenly explode everywhere — and out comes Janet in her 33rd century business suit, snapping her perfect body to that trademark machine-swing. Three house-rocking grooves in, she stops the whole deal — and just stares 10,000 people down, for a full, jaw-jutted, wordless three minutes. This is Corporate Janet, the tough 'n' tender leader marshalling her dancers like a just-in-time workforce, punishing you via classics such as Nasty and What Have You Done For Me Lately?, soothing you with ballads like Let's Wait A While, leaving the stage after 40 minutes like a departing mogul.

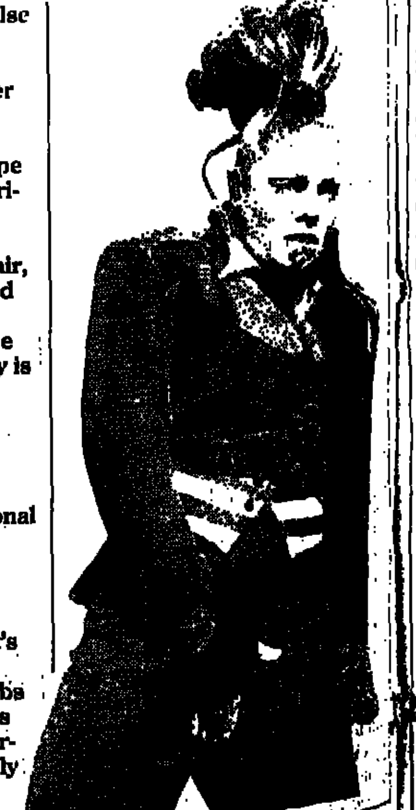
Lesson two: build a world up there. The second act jumps a universe, and brings us Janet Of The Children — a stage full of monstrous inflatable clocks, fairytale crescent moons, swarming with dancers rigged out like Alice-on-Acid. Here's where Jackson, now like some Mad Hatter in a car-park-sized bouncy castle, brings us her pop fluff: the Motown pastiches, the smiley confections, the street-dance hoofer routines.

Is she making fun of this aspect of her career? Clear as day she is. You know by the way this cavorting stops, with a blackout and a huge bang — Schizo-Janet's about to be someone else again.

Lesson Three: totally freak 'em out. She's back for another act, but this time, it's S&M Jackson: shiny boots and Wonderbra accompanying Rope Burn. During which, in a hilarious bit of post-porn panto, a poor wee systems manager is dragged on stage, tied to a chair, and lap-danced to by Janet and her sirens.

Sure, there's schmaltz — the Jackson family picture medley is shameless, but somehow it's surreally disconnected from everything else. And the last 10 minutes of the encore — which is Collegiate Jackson, back-slapping her close personal friends on stage — is the only moment of (maybe welcome) banality in the whole evening.

Generally, though, live pop doesn't get better than this. It's as postmodern as the most pompous art-rock, but it throbs with the unarguable funkiness of one of the great musical heritages of the century. I severely recommend you get yourself to Planet Janet, next flight.



Pop goes the music scene

Dan Glaister

THREE years ago it seemed that British pop music was back to its best. Oasis and Blur were fighting it out for the number one spot, Pulp and Suede were in the wings, and the Britpop sound was set to conquer America.

But today it is a different picture. Record sales are in decline, acts are being dropped from record labels, and concerts and festivals are being cancelled.

Now Alan McGee, head of Creation Records, whose roster includes Oasis, and a member of the Government's Creative Industries Task Force, suggests that the death knell has sounded for record companies and music retailing, and that bands will soon download directly on to the Internet.

Writing in last week's New Musical Express, under the headline, The Great Rock 'n' Roll Dwindle, Mr McGee points to low sales figures for recent albums which have reached the charts.

For him, the explanation is simple. "It's no wonder people aren't buying records. When I ask people what they think of the music scene, they say it's a dilution of a dilution of a dilution."

He says that the excitement that was traditionally provided by rock music is now generated by computer technology. "There's no rebellion in music any more. But if you are 15 years old and you buy a laptop, your mum doesn't even know how to turn it on, man. That's rock 'n' roll."

Mr McGee predicts: "There will be no record companies in five or 10 years' time. It will be sexier for bands to download their music on the Internet."

The future may be closer than Mr McGee, who first ventured on to the Internet just a couple of months ago, realises. For $12, customers at the Levi's store in London's Regent Street can cut their own compilation CDs, choosing from thousands of titles at a virtual record store kiosk.

Twin/Tone Records, a Minneapolis-based record label behind artists such as the Jayhawks and Soul Asylum, has decided to give up releasing CDs. Instead, the company will sell downloadable sound files over the Internet. Songs, artwork and sleevenotes will be available, with prices ranging from $1.50 for a single song to $10 for an album.

Mr McGee's arguments are borne out by others in Britain. Following the cancellation of two shows scheduled for Finsbury Park, north London — one because of poor ticket sales — and the ending of the Universe 98 dance weekend for the same reason, promoter Vince Power, head of the Mean Fiddler Organisation, said: "Ego keeps the music business going. And promoters, including myself, are very good at making excuses. Perhaps the truth is that the acts that are around just aren't big enough."

The NME's editor, Steve Sutherland, said: "We always get a bit anxious around April when labels start to drop bands, but this year it just seemed to continue."

But Mr Sutherland retains some optimism. "We're going to see a really healthy industry underground. Over the next few years this underground music will coalesce into something that the general public can relate to again."

Astounding performance . . . actor and director Robert Duvall is the driving force behind The Apostle

On a rocky road to glory

CINEMA
Gaby Wood

ROBERT DUVALL has been thinking about making The Apostle, a film about a Pentecostal preacher in the South, for more than 20 years. He has called preaching "the only authentic American art form". Some time ago Duvall was due to star in a Sidney Lumet film about two preachers and, though the part fell through, he had done so much research he decided to write his own script. Now he has directed it, stars in it, and put up a large part of the money himself. Any concerns he had about directing and acting at the same time were dismissed by Dennis Hopper, who just said, "It's easy, man."

Easy or not, The Apostle is clearly an actor's and not a director's film. It's Duvall's baby, born of his tendency to research his roles extensively, of the desire to showcase his own talent for methodically inhabiting a character, and, to some extent, of his background as a maker of documentaries. The first film he directed, We're Not The Jet Set (1977), was a documentary about Nebraska farm workers, and his first directed feature film, Angelo, My Love (1983), starred the Gypsy boy on whom the part was based. In interviews he speaks of making things "as real as possible".

The result is a tour de force, a film driven by a single virtuoso performance but — perhaps because of its intended "authenticity" — otherwise lacking in artistry or pace. It's both slow and stunning; Duvall is impressive, but there is little else to keep the attention. Some audiences have found him so entrancing they have experienced a near-conversion in the cinema. But although a great performance can make a film, a great performance is not the same thing as a great film.

The storyline follows Sonny, a Texan Pentecostal preacher who has been "a minister of the lord" since he was brought back from the dead, aged 12. Sonny is married to Jessie, a harried and very un-angel-like Farrah Fawcett; they have two kids. But Sonny is no saint. His moods are changeable: his acts of forceful inspiration alternate with a brittle aggression. When Jessie goes off with a younger minister and plots to take the church away from Sonny, he whacks the other man over the head with a bat. "I think he might be on the road to glory this time," says Sonny, half-pleased.

His own road to repentance leads him to a new life with a new name in Louisiana. The locals warm to him through his rousing chants — he gets a prayer slot on the radio and sets up a church, the "One way road to heaven". He flirts with Miranda Richardson, who works at the radio station, and converts a racist unbeliever, played by the curmudgeonly Billy Bob Thornton. Just when the world is on his side, the police catch up with him.

The real story, though, is in Duvall's face. How should we feel about this man and his temper? Will he kill again? Somehow, even when he is arrested, the film remains ambiguous — is he paying for his sins or is he an apostle wrongly punished by earthly powers? And the congregation — are they being deceived, taken in by his dubious charisma? Or are they genuinely brought nearer to God by him?

It's this unreadable nature of Duvall's portrayal which leads you to notice things about his physical presence: he has a tough, greased leather complexion; every so often you see the back of his sweaty neck in close-up; and his slicked mousy hair sits slightly away from his skin.

In his final preaching scene Duvall's face is concentrated above a large microphone, the cable wrapped around his thumb, his hand up in front of him. "We're gonna have a Holy Ghost explosion," he shouts. "How do we know the Lord loves us tonight? Because! Because! BECAUSE! He sent his only begotten son . . ." And he incites his audience: "We're gonna short-circuit the devil tonight. Devil get behind me!"

He steps from side to side, sweeping his hands behind him. "I said GET behind me!" This is the kind of talk that leads a venerable black minister to remark, "When you preachin' on the radio most of the white people think you're black. Now the coloured people, they know you ain't black, but they sure do like your style of preachin'." And it's this that is the film's reason for being: a repetitive, musical, lyrical effect in words and manner. Duvall pulls it off astoundingly.

Although he received an Oscar for best actor in 1983, Duvall is mostly known for his supporting roles. And the support he has offered is no secondary affair. His Tom Hagen in the first two Godfather films was a model of ominous normality and receding camouflage.

In Apocalypse Now he is unforgettable as Kilgore, the beefy Nam bully who goes gooey-eyed over the smell of napalm. Nothing can touch or scare him; a bomb drops, everyone ducks except him. It's as if only Duvall knows it's a movie. His first film role was in 1962, as the spooky but well-meaning Boo Radley in To Kill A Mockingbird. He doesn't appear until the end, tentative and stiff, as if in an a stupor.

These performances are very different, but they all have a subdued force. Duvall brings some brilliantly tense contradictions to The Apostle, yet somehow his character still seems out of place in the limelight.

Richard Williams is in France covering the World Cup

All the girls love a soldier (and so do the boys)

THEATRE
Michael Billington

MUCH Ado About Nothing is a tricky play: starry comic sparring between Beatrice and Benedick is surrounded by a contrived drama based on infinite gullibility. But in Cheek by Jowl's production at London's Playhouse, Declan Donnellan memorably turns it into an ensemble piece in which a callow, hermetic, fundamentally gay military culture comes into contact with a predominantly female world.

Donnellan begins with a group rendering of "Men were deceivers ever" and then splits the company into two. On the one hand, the green-jacketed soldiers involved in a strange mix of rugger scrum and Eton wall game; on the other, the Edwardian-gowned, all-female society of Leonato's household (with the governor's brother subsumed into the character of Ursula). Out of the conflict between the two comes the strange, dark comedy. Claudio is quite clearly Don Pedro's lover — indeed, at one point he rushes straight past his intended bride, Hero, to embrace his princely patron — and Benedick's social discomfiture arises from his betrayal of this congenital-bachelor ethos.

What I like about this reading is that it opens up several possibilities. It could be seen as a comment on women's ability to civilise an enclosed military caste, or (as in Cheek by Jowl's As You Like It) as a study in Shakespearean bisexuality, or simply as an acknowledgment of the risk and danger of love. Whichever way you take it, it is filled with enlivening detail. One notices, for instance, the way Don Pedro and Beatrice get noisily drunk together, suggesting his sexual unease and her faintly tomboyish isolation.

As always, Cheek by Jowl's great strength lies in creating a precise social context with absolute economy. I have seen productions of Much Ado set in Renaissance Italy, British India and civil-war Mexico. But Nick Ormerod's design and Judith Greenwood's lighting very simply evoke a timeless Edwardiana — a world of sunshine, tea parties and fancy-dress dances, slim volumes of verse and infinite leisure for games of love.

You emerge from this superb production feeling you have seen a familiar play afresh.

"We laugh", wrote Bergson, "every time a person gives the impression of being a thing." So why not when a machine behaves like a person? It's an idea Alan Ayckbourn explored in his bleak dystopian comedy, Henceforward. But he takes it even further in his 53rd and latest play, Comic Potential, at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough: it's overlong and over-stuffed with ideas, but it mixes futurism and feminism in uniquely Ayckbournian style and boasts a mesmerising performance by Janie Dee.

Ayckbourn starts with an intriguing premise: a future in which comedy is dead, technology has completely taken over and daytime TV soaps are filled with programmable, android performers. Into the nightmare world of a regional TV station, where a onetime comic legend is directing these robotic actoids, steps an aspiring young writer, Adam Trainsmith. He is in awe both of the director and of the Hollywood comic tradition; and, when he detects a sudden spark of humour in a female actoid, he starts to fall in love with her.

Already it is clear — and this is only the half of it — that Ayckbourn is writing several plays at once. For a start there is a satire on the world of television, a place where actors are androids. But this is also a play about the death of comedy. It is almost as if Ayckbourn himself, fearful of the new sobriety in Tony Blair's new Britain, is transmitting his distilled comic wisdom while there is still time.

The third play on offer is a primal love story. This is much the weirdest and most successful of the interlocking ideas, in that it taps into Ayckbourn's instinctive feminism and gift for farce. Some might jib at the word feminist: after all, Adam humanises the android, known as Jacie Triplethree, and teaches her to read with the help of Genesis. But she not only turns into a rebellious Eve; she is also far wittier, stronger and more resourceful than her patriarchal instructor.

But, cheering as the play is, there are gaping flaws in its logic: it seems odd that comedy should be endangered in a future where its past treasures are instantly on tap. And I much prefer Ayckbourn the social observer — the Molière of the middle classes, as a German critic once called him — to Ayckbourn the sci-fi fantasist.

Crime

Lucretia Stewart

The Last Best Hope, by Ed McBain (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

SO, FAREWELL, Matthew Hope. McBain has, it would seem, indeed "phased out" his laconic Florida lawyer, as he indicated a year ago that he planned to. I'm sad to see him go. The Matthew Hope novels were always less tightly plotted than the 87th Precinct ones — and this one is the baggiest of them all — but I loved Hope. Here, he links up with Steve Carella in the frozen north to solve a missing persons case. They solve the mystery all right but the pairing seems very contrived and an air of sadness and resignation hangs over the whole book.

Night Passage, by Robert B Parker (John Murray, £16.99)

ROBERT B PARKER'S Spenser novels have been sliding downhill for some years, so this terrific non-Spenser book is particularly welcome. Jesse Stone is a broken-down cop who, having been kicked out of the Los Angeles Police Department for drinking, takes a job as police chief in the small Massachusetts town of Paradise. But there's trouble in Paradise, and not a small part of it stems from the fact that Stone is not quite the drunken pushover that his new employers expected him to be.

The Safe House, by Nicci French (Michael Joseph, £10)

"*AS GRIPPING* as Minette Walters or your money back," says the strap round the book. Oh, please, give my money back immediately. Actually, the Minette Walters comparison is no longer that much of a recommendation as Walters's desperate search for ingenuity leads her down ever more labyrinthine paths. But those paths are not as tortuous as the ones devised by the inventive Nicci French (a *nom de plume* for husband-and-wife team Sean French and Nicci Gerrard). French can certainly write; it's her content that makes me uneasy. The "safe house" of the title is a psychotherapeutic concept, which French never succeeds fully in explaining, used by Dr Samantha Laschen, specialist in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. The whole thing backfires, leaving behind only a bloody mess.

Eye of the Cricket, by James Sallis (No Exit Press, £12)

SALLIS is a strange writer, drawn-out, laid-back, reminiscent of Walter Mosley but more poetic. His New Orleans is a violent, steamy, smouldering place, waiting to erupt; his hero, Lew Griffin, is a private investigator cum writer cum university lecturer who mirrors the city. One day Griffin is called to the hospital where a man lies in intensive care. This man claims to be Lew Griffin, author of, amongst other works, The Old Man — in fact the work of the real Griffin. This is a story about children and the pain they bring you: Lew's lost son, David; Alouette, the missing daughter of Lew's great love, LaVerne; and Danny, loser son of Lew's friend, Don, the cop. Sallis walks a narrow line between poetry and pretension. Most of the time he carries it off.

When cancer grows hungry

Giles Foden

C: Because Cowards Get Cancer Too
by John Diamond
Vermilion 240pp £9.99

AS ANY devotee of astrology will know, the word cancer comes from the Latin for crab: the malignant tumour so called, according to Galen, because the swollen veins around it bear a resemblance to a crab's limbs. It is a peculiarly powerful etymology, not only because it projects the creeping spread of the disease, but also because the very limit of that spread is so tied up with time, with blind hope on the one hand and awful anticipation on the other. The fact is, whatever sign the sufferer is under, this is a horoscope which may turn out bad, because of the tendency of cancers to return after removal.

It is a dreadful, dread-full situation, like waiting for pardon while on sentence of death.

Dread is a feeling powerfully conveyed in C, John Diamond's book about suffering and (for the time being) surviving the disease: in his opening page, he himself talks of how prognosis "can only ever be equivocal and even the best augured cancers can turn into fatal ones". It is that equivocation, the instability of the augur, which makes it all so frightening; for where can the sentence end when cancer is a verb as well as a noun? De Quincey knew this, writing of things that "silently cancer their way onwards", and so does Diamond, who takes us from initial, seemingly undangerous possibilities (a lump in his neck) to remission and re-entry, like a winged satellite, into relatively normal, but always conditional life.

Actual diagnosis at age 44 is preceded by tests during which, as he acknowledges, any consideration he gave cancer was "at a sort of existential arm's length". This head-in-sand attitude to medical matters is as natural to all of us as its antithesis — the feeling that there is something there, deep inside, deeply wrong. That kind of metaphysical hypochondria may be nothing more than the modern equivalent of original sin, which ancient burden the publishing industry happily exploits in the current vogue for illness narrative. Books in the genre tend to crave explanation — "why me?" the sick narrator will ask — and science is often brought in aid to furnish religious answers in disguise.

What used, in this context, to be considered as a curse, as bad blood, is now presented as a genetic predisposition. It is in this vein that Diamond worries about the future of his two young children, given that there is cancer in the family of his wife, fellow journalist Nigella Lawson. Both her mother and her sister died of the disease, and that is the least of the things which make her the heroine of this book as much as Diamond is the hero, right from her initial fortitude on March 27, 1997 onwards: "That night I was watching EastEnders and waiting for Nigella to come and join me. Ten minutes in she sat down next to me, put a cup of tea down, took my hands in hers and said: 'Mr Mady phoned. He says they've found some cancerous cells.'"

There are many terrific bits of writing here — check out his description of a blood-test as a "pay-as-you-bleed medical knocking shop staffed by cool, leggy nurses-receptionists in Calvin Klein lab coats" — and it is these that are the most important thing about C, more important than its authentic generation of pity or inadvertent setting down of a vade-mecum for other sufferers.

Those who have been through similar experiences will recognise how relatives (in this case Diamond's parents) sometimes go into denial more than sufferers: "In return for their self-protectingly minimising the illness, I would maximise it, scaring them even more than was necessary. Conversations between us became bizarre with them talking about what sounded like a nasty cold and me insisting that death was hours away."

Death wasn't, but some very nasty treatments, surgical procedures and side-effects were, including irradiation of the neck and face, which involved having a Perspex mask made, to make sure the radiation gun hit the right spots. Diamond relates how this turned out to be "a cumbersome see-through version of the black latex hoods they sell in the more recherché sex shops with that same gaping mouth hole and sightless eyes". All it needed, he adds with typical grim humour, "was a couple of hooks to take a chain or two".

The disease to which Diamond is enchained is far more insidious than his "porno-mask". As loss of weight and loss of taste increased, he and Nigella made a horrible discovery: a lump on his tongue. This meant invasive surgery: as Diamond tells it, the surgeon would cut "a wedge of my forearm out and sew it into the gap where part of my tongue had been removed. He'd then take some skin from my thigh to cover the hole in my forearm."

THESE and other gothic horrors are indeed "chilling". That is the word Diamond's wife uses when, woozy after his operation, he holds up a note in front of his livid mouth: "Can you see a tongue in there?". Then comes his heroic post-operative struggle to talk reasonably properly again, to learn how to manipulate "the muscular stanchion" from which "the tumorous golf ball had been snatched".

That last is a heroic phrase too. Although Diamond may, as he concedes, still have talking problems and pain problems and mucus problems, at the moment his biopsies are clear.

Whatever else it has done (his attitude to the redeeming aspects of his illness is properly cautious), his bleak experience has shone light on a very fine prose writer. I hope we don't lose him.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £8.99 contact CultureShop, see ad on page 33

Nose for a good story

Philip French

Lit Ed
by Anthony Curtis
Carcanet 374pp £25

UNLIKE the cinema and the theatre, where virtually every new movie and play gets a review, on the literary front only a minute proportion of the perpetual flood of books receives coverage, and it's the job of the literary editor to decide which to do and who shall do them. In Lit Ed, Anthony Curtis draws on a lifetime of writing and commissioning reviews to give a highly entertaining account of the business.

He began writing on books for the New Statesman while an Oxford undergraduate just after the war, worked for the TLS in the days when most articles were unsigned, launched the Sunday Telegraph's book page in 1960, and subsequently was lit ed at the Financial Times for more than 20 years.

His book is packed with information, shrewd comments and discreet gossip. The best chapter centres on the early days at the Telegraph when the young Curtis, eager to make his mark, was subjected to pressures from his editor and senior staff to give precedence to profiles, interviews and diaries over reviews. He met with threats and blandishments from publishers, and he had to face such problems as how to treat books the paper had paid sizeable sums to serialise and how to deal with works by members of staff.

Curtis fought off populist pressures and signed up two star reviewers, Nigel Dennis and Rebecca West, both waspish wits. West's letters to Curtis rejecting books he offered her were as amusing and often longer than her reviews. Turning down Rose Macaulay's Letters To A Friend, she said: "It isn't that I object to her religion — it's that it's sheer twaddle, and the non-religious part debilitating twaddle, too."

Taste of India lacks vital ingredient

Helen Stevenson

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard
by Kiran Desai
Faber 210pp £14.99

IN A small town in India, a post office official yells at his slovenly staff: "You will kindly pull up your socks and begin!" There has always been a certain buffoonish comic potential in the linguistic legacy of the British in India.

It is a potential Kiran Desai's novel happily exploits. For the most part, though, the English language is comfortably at home here, with no hint of dislocation. English has long been regarded in India as simply one more Indian language. And yet this novel is the product of a particularly complex process of hybridisation: 27-year-old Desai was educated in India, Britain and the United States.

Sampath is the son of a dreamy eccentric mother and of a rational, enterprising father who is given to verbal dissertations on the value of work. He spends his days lolling about at the post office, reading other people's mail. His father and grandmother are vexed by his listlessness and favour the sock-pulling-up approach. He should apply himself; he should eat more. "I do not want an egg. I want my freedom," he retorts. It is an interesting opposition of options.

He goes to live in a guava tree, and becomes a contemplative sage. People come to consult him, and are impressed to find he is able to tell them all sorts of things about themselves that they already knew. (His years as an epistolary eavesdropper have not gone wasted.) His father cashes in and builds up a leisure industry around him.

Sampath's finest hour comes with the delivery of the Sermon in the Guava Tree, a homily of laced-together platitudes. Before long he is scraping the rhetorical barrel with declarations along the lines of — "if you cannot find a car you must do without". But platitudes fit snugly into the brain, and even the most sceptical listeners are surprised to find their own speech infected with Sampath's uninspired observations. An infestation of alcoholic monkeys disrupts the scene. Every man competes to become "he who has brought a solution". Sampath grows glum before this evidence of the corruption of men. The novel ends in farce.

Hullabaloo In The Guava Orchard is a good, small-scale novel. It is not that there is too little in it, but rather that what is in it seems to be perceived from a distance. It seemed to be unsure of its own ends — is it a moral/political tale about the commercial exploitation of a dreamy continent? A religious allegory? A satire or a celebration?

The flavour of the exotic came in the form of wonderful descriptions of culinary preparations, simmered down to something smooth, dense and rich. The experience of reading, though pleasurable, was more like a trip to an excellent Indian restaurant than an experience of the continent itself.

Kiran Desai: product of complex hybridisation

To hell and back

James Campbell

Wising Up the Marks: The Amodern William Burroughs
by Timothy S Murphy
University of California Press
276pp £35

With William Burroughs
by Victor Bockris
Fourth Estate 264pp £9.99

WILLIAM BURROUGHS'S Naked Lunch is one of the great boys' adventure stories of our time. All the ingredients of the traditional racy yarn are there: captive-takings, elaborate tortures, a hint of sexual slavery ("He pulls her brutally to her feet and pins her hands behind her . . ."), a capitalist criminal with a dubiously exotic name (Salvador Hassan O'Leary, alias "The Afterbirth Tycoon"), even a high-speed chase at the end, climaxing in a cop-killing. Naked Lunch is also an autobiographical account of a trip to hell and back. Burroughs, who died last year, was one of the true voyagers of modern literature. The nature of his quest altered according to period and geographical location.

In the 1940s, he set out to experience the *frisson* of petty crime in the New York underworld, picking pockets and becoming hooked on heroin "as a scientific experiment". At the beginning of the next decade, he ventured into the jungles of South America, comically underprepared, in search of the vegetable drug *yagé*, which he was convinced would give him telepathic powers (it didn't, though it did make him violently sick). In 1959, he developed his notorious cut-up technique that is supposed to reveal "motivations and intentions hidden in ideological texts".

Burroughs also dabbled in scientology, Reichian analysis and Native American exorcism, among other systems and rituals. He was willing to try anything, go anywhere, if it would help him unlock the trap of "reality". Everyday life, for Burroughs, was a cross between a bore and a nightmare.

Burroughs believed that he was possessed — "I mean a definite possessing entity" — by an "Ugly Spirit", which had entered his body when he was an infant, and that he had undergone an evil, but unnameable, experience in a wood with his governess and her boyfriend. The desire to evade the Ugly Spirit shaped the course of his life, and also — though it may seem a jumble, it does have shape — his large body of work.

When he met the artist Brion Gysin in Paris in 1958, Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg with the news, excited yet again at the thought of beating the reality rap. Gysin was "doing in painting what I try to do in writing. He regards painting as a hole in the texture of so-called 'reality', through which he is exploring an actual space existing in outer space".

It was once said of Burroughs that he was a writer one read for "the good bits", such as the low-life scenes in Junkie, or the opening pages of The Ticket That Exploded. But while some books are more entertaining than others, it is necessary none the less to swallow Burroughs whole, and to accept that many of his experiments failed (or are boring), in order to understand what a serious and original artist he was.



William Burroughs: Everyday life was a cross between a bore and a nightmare

How are we to deconstruct the fact that writers such as Burroughs and Genet, who lived by their determination to evade the academic establishment, are now among its favourite playthings? Tim Murphy in Wising Up The Marks hangs with the hard men of Theory — he can pack Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard into a single paragraph, and writes about "the symmetrical dynamics of junky-doctor relations".

With William Burroughs is much more fun. An American edition was available a dozen or so years ago. This revised version, though it contains little that is noticeably new, makes it more accessible. It consists of a series of taped conversation between Burroughs and an assortment of guests, organised by Victor Bockris. Susan Sontag, Lou Reed, Patti Smith, Andy Warhol, and others come to supper (though not all at once), and Bockris gets the conversation going by asking a question such as "Were you in love with your wife?", meaning Joan Vollmer, whom Burroughs killed in a shooting accident in 1951.

Burroughs: "I find great difficulty in defining what being in love with someone means."

Bockris: "Take it as the point where you start to lose power."

Burroughs: "It's a very good definition, very good definition indeed . . . No, I was never in love with her in that sense."

A cut-up I performed on that extract produced the following result: "Bockris with your wife? Bockris power it's very in love great difficulty in love — someone means what with her in defining was never Burroughs — start love with a very good definition — indeed to lose."

A master of the strange and sublime

James Wood

The Rings of Saturn
by W G Sebald
translated by Michael Hulse
Harvill 296pp £12pbk

ANXIOUS, daring, extreme, muted — only an annulling wash of contradictory adjectives can approach the agitated density of W G Sebald's writing. More simply, this German who has lived in England for more than 30 years is one of the most exciting and most mysteriously sublime of contemporary European writers. When his book The Emigrants appeared two years ago, one immediately thought of Walter Benjamin's remark that all great works found a new genre or dissolve an old one. At last, a contemporary writer had discovered a way to stretch the novel-form beyond its frame, to harass realism into a state of self-examination.

Yet Sebald's adventurousness was also grounded in the actual. Indeed, it says much for Sebald's profound literary tact that The Emigrants made moving and real a dilemma that is usually an abstraction: the question of what is real and what is invented. In The Emigrants Sebald told the stories of four men, who were the victims of different kinds of upheaval or catastrophe: two were casualties of Nazism, and two of exile, and all had had their lives eaten at by sadness, by a kind of internal wasting sickness which Sebald superbly evoked. All of these characters actually existed, yet The Emigrants reads like fiction — and is fiction — because of the care and patterning of his narration, because of its anguished interiority, and because he so mixes established fact with unstable invention that the two categories copulate and produce a kind of truth which lies just beyond verification: that is, fictional truth.

But on its own, this would not be daring or even new. What is extraordinary about both The Emigrants and The Rings Of Saturn is the scrupulous uncertainty with which Sebald invests his narratives. In both books, the narrator is proximate to Sebald, but not identical with him. In The Rings Of Saturn, for instance, the narrator tramps around Norfolk and Suffolk, more like Beckett's Molloy than the man called Sebald.

If one passage can suggest the frail beauties, the dreamy suggestiveness, and the deep playfulness of Sebald's work, it might be a passage from The Emigrants, in which Sebald is walking with his Uncle Kasimir, on the beach in New Jersey. "I often come out here, said Uncle Kasimir, it makes me feel that I am a long way away, though I never quite know from where. Then he took a camera out of his large-check jacket and took this picture, a print of which he sent me two years later, probably when he had finally shot the whole film, together with his pocket watch."

Under this paragraph, Sebald prints a photograph of a man who looks a little like the author, standing on a beach. But the photograph is so murky that it is impossible to tell. We are encouraged to look at the photograph, which then turns us away from itself, converting the passage, very movingly, into a meditation on visibility. The literary care, in just a few sentences, is immense: the detail about how it took Uncle Kasimir two years to shoot the rest of the film suggests a life without photographs, a life without much sense of its own visibility. And the detail of the pocket watch, like a skull in a Renaissance painting, suggests both Time controlled and lost.

IN BOTH books, Sebald's language is an extraordinary, almost antiquarian edifice, full of the daintiest lustres. He is helped in this by the poet Michael Hulse, who renders Sebald's German into English. Sebald, who is a Professor of German at the University of East Anglia, then powerfully treads his own English into Hulse's. One of the oddest effects of this prose is a quality of melodrama and extremism running alongside a soft, dreamy mutedness.

There is certainly a quality of the Gothic about Sebald, written up in his dementedly patient locutions: "I stuck to the sandy path until to my astonishment, not to say horror, I found myself back again at the same tangled thicket from which I had emerged about an hour before . . ." Indeed, for all the quietness of the prose, exaggeration is its principle.

As he tramps through East Anglia, he communicates with the dead, and ponders the strangest information, with which he is insanely profligate — the decline of herring catches, the destruction of elms in England, the habits of the silkworm.

He is especially attracted to the elegiac, to all that is dwindling and passing. At Somerleyton Hall, he sees nothing but grasses and weeds where once was a thriving estate. "It takes just one awful second, I often think, and an entire epoch passes." At Dunwich, on the coast, Sebald tells us that one of the most important ports in Europe during the Middle Ages now lies under water: "All of it has gone under, quite literally, and is now below the sea . . ."

Sebald tells the stories of eccentrics and fantasists. We encounter the memory of Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of the Rubaiyat, who retired at an early age to a "tiny two-roomed cottage on the perimeter of the estate, and there he spent the next fifteen years", living on vegetables. Swinburne, the poet, is also of interest to this unhappy narrator, for Swinburne, like Fitzgerald, essentially retreated from life, and lived quietly in Putney. He reminded a visitor, writes Sebald, of a silkworm; and it is entirely characteristic of Sebald's writing that this last fact might be invented, and that the "visitor" might be Sebald himself.

The true subject of The Rings Of Saturn is death. In the first section of the book, Sebald writes about Sir Thomas Browne's Urn-Burial, which is about the complicated artefacts that human beings surround themselves with in death. The country houses which Sebald describes are like the Pyramids and pagan graves that Browne described: they are mausoleums. The artist is like the silkworm, suggests Sebald, killing himself as he produces his fine thread of silk. In this sense, we are all artists, or death-artists: in a plane from Amsterdam to Norwich, the narrator looks down and notes, "it is as if there were no people, only the things they have made and in which they are hiding". (Sebald is hiding in this book, of course.)

Elegy, in England, is easy to buy, especially of the country-house kind. But what distinguishes Sebald from most English practitioners is the deep unease of his elegy — its metaphysical, Germanic insistence. Sebald does not just see a political decline; he sees a decline of which we are not just the inheritors but the creators, too. This, I think, is because he believes in a kind of eternal recurrence. One character tells the narrator: "it seems to me sometimes that we never got used to being on this earth and life is just one great, ongoing, incomprehensible blunder". That sentence might stand as both statement and emblem for this great, strange and moving work.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £10 contact CultureShop

Gebrselassie roars to record

Duncan Mackay

HAILE GEBRSELASSIE broke the world record for the 5,000m for a fourth time in the Helsinki Stadium last Saturday.

Roared on by a crowd of 40,000 he covered the last mile in 3min 58sec to finish in 12min 39.36sec and take 0.38sec off Daniel Komen's record.

Having taken the world record for the 10,000m in Hengelo, the 25-year-old Ethiopian had completed the task he had set himself this season, to regain the world marks for 5,000 and 10,000m.

It was his 14th world record, and he joined Australia's Ron Clarke as the only men to break the 5,000m best four times.

PHOTOGRAPH: TOR WENNSTRÖM

Sports Diary Stephen Bradfield

Rusedski's Wimbledon dream shattered

THE chances of a British victory in the men's singles at Wimbledon for the first time since the late Fred Perry's hat-trick of titles in the thirties have receded because of an injury to Greg Rusedski.

Britain's No 1 seriously injured his left ankle during the Stella Artois tournament at Queen's and appears to have little or no chance of being fit for the All England championships which start on June 22.

"I have been told that there is ligament damage," said his coach, Tony Pickard, last Sunday. "It is possible the ankle may mend in a few days but it could take several months."

Rusedski slipped in his third-round match against Italy's Laurence Tieleman, who was beaten 7-6, 6-4 in the final by Australia's Scott Draper.

"Greg is getting treatment, but there is no point in him trying to play the hero and rushing back for Wimbledon unless the ankle is 100 per cent," Pickard said.

At first it was feared Rusedski had broken a bone, but Pickard is hopeful about the ligaments: "We should know within the next 48 hours what the exact position is. Greg is young and a quick healer."

This year's tournament proved a miserable one for British players and sodden spectators alike. Rusedski's injury was the obvious low point, but Tim Henman's 2-6, 7-6, 6-4 quarter-final defeat by Tieleman, ranked outside the top 200, was yet another example of the British No 2's curious mental fragility and lack of concentration.

Tieleman had tears in his eyes after his 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 semi-final win earlier in the day against Zimbabwe's Byron Black. He again recovered from a set down, as he had in every round except the first-set default by Rusedski.

The 25-year-old Italian had to qualify for this tournament and in the final all those matches caught up with him.

Draper, without a title on the ATP Tour, finally came good, although he very nearly missed Queen's to have surgery on his right knee.

THE 500cc motorcycle Spanish Grand Prix produced a home victory with Carlos Checa on his Honda taking the checkered flag first. Michael Doohan, the world champion, was in contention for less than one circuit of the track, going out on the first lap after a collision with Max Biaggi of Italy.

OSCAR DE LA HOYA retained the World Boxing Council welterweight title before 45,000 spectators, one of the largest crowds in the sport's history, at the Sun Bowl in El Paso last Saturday. The champion stopped Patrick Charpentier of France in the third round after putting him on the canvas three times. The referee stepped in when De La Hoya, who is unbeaten in his professional career with 28 wins including 23 knockouts, had his opponent's knees buckling with a straight right.

LONDON BRONCOS were a busted flush against St Helens in rugby league's super League last Sunday. Both teams are in contention for top five play-off places, but the game at Knowlsley Road revealed a huge gulf between then as the Saints ran in 10 tries in a 58-6 rout. The unerring boot of Sean Long, again preferred at scrum-half to Bobbie Goulding, added to Broncos suffering with nine goals. Little has gone right for Broncos since being taken over by Virgin during the winter, and their coach Tony Currie said: "The boys are sitting in the changing rooms like mongrel dogs with their tails between their legs."

THERE was a surprise in golf's Buick Classic, which was won by J P Hayes, a player who does not even have a world ranking. After finishing level with Jim Furyk, Hayes birdied the first hole of a sudden-death play-off at Westchester, New York to take his first US Tour title. The players had been tied on 201 after 54 holes, the event having been reduced to three rounds because of rain.

The European Grand Prix at Slaley Hall in Northumberland was abandoned because of rain. It was the first time in 25 years that a European Tour event had ended without a result.

LANCE ARMSTRONG, the cyclist who has fought back from cancer, confirmed his remarkable recovery by clinching victory in the Tour of Luxembourg last Sunday. The American finished 21st on the final stage of the four-day race to clinch the title in 17hr 14min 29sec.

ENGLAND'S cricket selectors made only one change to the squad for the second Test against South Africa at Lord's. Dean Headley of Kent was called up as a replacement for the injured Yorkshire fast bowler Darren Gough. England are anxious to build on the psychological advantage they gained at Edgbaston, where rain denied them a chance of winning the first Test and taking a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.



Down and probably out . . . Rusedski feels the pain PHOTO: GARY MIRROR

Rugby Union New Zealand A 18 England XV 10

Spirited England restore their pride

Robert Armstrong in Hamilton

ENGLAND flew to Dunedin on Monday to prepare for the first Test against the All Blacks, having restored their self-respect with a challenging performance against a New Zealand A team here last weekend.

Against a side including seven All Blacks, the tourists put the nightmare of the 76-0 Australia defeat behind them, taking a merited half-time lead and continuing to play constructive football after their hosts regained control with a second try after the interval by Lee Stensness.

It was a punishing physical examination in monsoon-like conditions which compelled England to dig deep and brought out their commitment and skill. The downside was a failure to break out of their own half in the second period when lack of experience in key areas prevented them building on their dreadnought defence.

England, in fact, created enough opportunities to forge well ahead before half-time which, had they been accepted, would have radically altered the subsequent pattern of play and perhaps produced a win.

Phil Greening, Rob Fidler, Dave Sims, Steve Ojomoh, Ben Clarke and Nick Beal each made a solid case for Test selection, emphasising the collective power of the Gloucester forward presence which allowed Clarke, Beal and the England captain Matt Dawson to impose their authority. But Josh Lewsey, the former Bristol fly-half, took the shine off an inventive display with some bizarrely inconsistent kicking.

The 22-year-old Greening, who played limited first-team rugby last season, was arguably their most dynamic player. England's coach Clive Woodward believes he needs to develop more explosive power but there is no denying the Gloucester hooker's remarkable mental strength.

Ojomoh was bold and resourceful on the blind side, making the hard yards and upstaging the All Black flanker Andrew Blowers, and Clarke, at No 8, also showed the kind of streetwise intelligence at close quarters that will be indispensable at Test level.

Possibly the most encouraging contribution came from the 20-year-old Sale open-side Pat Sanderson, who demonstrated the ability to adapt quickly whenever the New Zealanders switched the point of attack or attempted to disrupt England's rucking. If Woodward jettisons Tony Diprose there is every chance that Sanderson, Clarke and Ojomoh will be chosen as the back-row unit.

It is anyone's guess what England's All Black coach John Mitchell thought. In effect he has been gagged by the England management since he voiced his disagreement with Woodward over the handling of the players in the wake of the Brisbane débâcle.

No doubt Mitchell was pleased to see Jonah Lomu bottled up for lengthy periods, though the All Black wing did make a couple of charges through midfield, allowing Blowers to put Caleb Ralph over for a 23rd-minute try in the right corner. Lomu, who was substituted by Tana Umaga on the hour, probably did enough to secure a Test place.

Auckland coach Graham Henry had regained the initiative for the A side by sending on the scrum-half Jon Preston for Rhys Duggan at half-time, a change that enabled the Kiwi pack to perform with tighter discipline and keep possession for minutes on end.

Adrian Cashmore's second penalty put the hosts two scores in front late on and battling England were left with the first-half memory of Fidler driving through a line-out for a splendid try after Sims caught the throw-in in the right corner.

● Scotland avoided an England-style massacre against Australia and earned praise from their hosts after losing the opening Test in Sydney 45-3. The Wallabies' principal scorer was Matt Burke, who amassed 25 points from a try, four conversions and four penalties.

● The Boland wing Stefan Terblanche marked his debut for South Africa with four tries in the 37-13 victory over Ireland in Bloemfontein last Saturday.

Football World Cup Group G: England 2 Tunisia 0

England given a head start

David Lacey in Marseille

ENGLAND remembered their lines in the Stade Vélodrome on Monday. They also remembered their close-order drill. As a result Glenn Hoddle's team achieved a better start to this World Cup than most of their predecessors in previous tournaments.

The victory over Tunisia, one of the weaker finalists, was hardly unexpected, but it was achieved with rather more comfort than might have been expected. None of Hoddle's players went into the game with experience of playing in the final stage of a World Cup, but by the end they were beginning to look old hands.

It was not a spectacular performance, but then the situation did not demand it. England kept their heads, Alan Shearer used his superbly to nod them into the lead shortly before half-time, and in the penultimate minute Paul Scholes completed a solid win with a goal of typically calm execution.

For 87 minutes it looked as if Hoddle would gain the added satisfaction of seeing his team survive the opening match without any yellow cards. Then Sol Campbell committed a gratuitous foul on Imed Ben Younes, one of the Tunisian substitutes, and will take a caution into his next game, which is likely to be against Romania in Toulouse on June 22.

Encouraging though England's start has been, little new was learnt about their chances of beating the Romanians before they have to face Colombia in Lens. Both will surely provide rather stiffer opposition than a Tunisian team that turned out to be a mixture of the neat and the gauche: natty one moment, shabby the next.

The important thing was that England remained the solid, integrated unit away from home that had qualified for France in some style. What remains to be discovered is their ability to produce the moments of quality, especially in attack, which will become more and more necessary the further they progress.

Captain to captain . . . Alan Shearer establishes a toehold over his Tunisian opposite number Sami Trabelsi PHOTOGRAPH: DARREN WALSH

England were less in need of the sorcerer's touch than the sergeant major's sense of order. If Hoddle is going to make a decent fist of this World Cup he will look to the consistency of his senior NCOs, who did all that was required of them.

Paul Ince pulled the midfield together after an awkward start when, for a time, Skander Souayah raised the spectre of some of this year's warm-up matches at Wembley as he threntened to exploit the space he was being given. In fact there was a near-calamity for England in the third minute when Kaies Ghodbane instigated a slick sequence of passes which found Souayah in space and in range, his shot ricocheting wide off Campbell. Apart from the free headers wasted by Khaled Badra and Ben Younes at the end of each half England's defenders were seldom troubled thereafter.

The match confirmed the potential of Shearer as a match-winner and Scholes as the most natural replacement for Paul Gascoigne in the role of supporting attacker. Teddy Sheringham, below par since the New Year, did much to confirm Hoddle's argument that he rises to occasions, although for the last six minutes he gave way to Michael Owen, the short, slim, swift shape of things to come.

Defensively England suffered few of their recent flutters against opponents taking them on for pace and guile, although Romania and Colombia may renew some familiar anxieties. All that was asked of David Seaman was concentration on a largely idle afternoon.

For a while, in fact, the Tunisian goalkeeper, Chokri El Ouaer, looked as if he might become a national hero by keeping England at bay. On the half-hour, Ince exchanged passes with Sheringham and then released Graeme Le Saux on the left. Scholes met the Chelsea player's cross with a firm downward header that El Ouaer somehow managed to keep out.

Seven minutes later Ince and Shearer worked the ball out to Sheringham whose sharp centre from the right found Scholes in another scoring position but again unable to beat El Ouaer, who turned his half-hit shot wide. But an England goal was in the offing and in the 41st minute it arrived.

From the start Shearer was consistently being pushed and jostled by Sami Trabelsi, captain to captain as it were. Now Trabelsi fouled his opposite number on the right, and from Le Saux's free-kick Shearer rose from a clutch of defenders to head the ball down inside the near post.

England gradually wound down for much of the second half. Their supporters sang the theme from The Great Escape, but Hoddle's players were never going to have to tunnel their way out of this one.

For a long time the most emphatic moment of the last 45 minutes was the audible crack with which David Batty's boot caught Ben Younes above the left eye as the England midfielder quite legitimately tried to hook the ball clear. But the postscript was more to English taste.

With stoppage time indicated, Ince flicked the ball away from one Tunisian and as it dropped, with two more converging, backheeled a short pass to Scholes who made space before curling an excellent shot inside the right-hand post.

As starts go England could not have asked for anything more. But more is bound to be asked of Hoddle's players — and soon.

● Romania beat Colombia 1-0, with a goal from Adrian Ilie, in Monday's other opening game of Group G.

World Cup round-up

BRAZIL and Scotland set the tone for the 16th Mundial by producing the highest scoring opening match since the 1958 finals in Sweden.

The holders won 2-1 at the Stade de France in Paris but were made to work hard for victory by Scotland, who recovered strongly after conceding an early goal.

Ronaldo showed brief glimpses of why he is regarded as the world's best player but it took a bizarre own goal — the ball rebounding off keeper Jim Leighton's face into the chest of Tommy Boyd and over the line — to seal Scotland's fate.

If that lit the blue touch paper Morocco's Mustapha Hadji provided the fireworks in the second Group A game as the Africans held Norway to a 2-2 draw in Montpellier.

Chile's striker Marcelo Salas gave Italy's defenders a taste of what they can expect next season, when he will be playing for Lazio, by scoring twice against the Azzurri. His second gave his side the lead, but Roberto Baggio won a controversial penalty — he appeared to aim his cross deliberately at the arm of a Chilean defender — and converted it for the equaliser.

Nigeria and Spain produced the best match of the tournament's first round. The Super Eagles came from behind twice in Nantes before Sunday Oliseh's powerful half-volley from 30 yards consigned Spain to defeat.

Tournament debutants Iran, Jamaica and Japan all played with plenty of spirit but lost respectively to Yugoslavia, Croatia and Argentina.

Fifa's clampdown on the tackle from behind was reflected in the open, attacking football that characterised early games. The rash of red cards that had been feared did not materialise, and four games had elapsed before the tournament's first sending off, Bulgaria's Anatoli Nankov getting his matching orders two minutes from time in the Group D match against Paraguay.

Off the field the tournament was beset by a ticket scandal — and English football hooligans.

Thousands of fans learned that the package deals they had been sold did not include match tickets. Among the disappointed were 12,500 Japanese supporters, many of whom abandoned their trip at Tokyo airport.

Bruno Travade, communications director of the French Organising Committee, said: "If fans have not received tickets, we assume they bought them from unauthorised operators. I suggest the victims sue the people who cheated them."

The centre of Marseille resembled a war zone as drunken English fans in the city for the match against Tunisia fought running battles with rival supporters and riot police.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

4 See 15
6 See 15
9 See 25
10 Complaint of a scene of mutiny — put team first (8)
11 PC professor? (11)
15,4ac.,6,18 Some benefit for solvers (solvers imagine) could get a young fool (youth wasted) to foil decay (1,6,2,4,3,5,4,3,4,)
17 Find some of you near the door (7)
18 See 15
22 Container on river makes one curse (8)
23 Britain needs a king to contain its leader (6)
24 Time for sleuth to return Scouts' transport (4,4)
25, 9 Funny thing to go wrong in a philosopher, one seeking a quest (6,6)

Down

1 One who won't have a standard? (6)
2 To achieve one's purchase is about right for a cartoonist (10)
3 Looking out from the shield to insult the English (8)
4 A cover to make from Melton (8)
5 Fightin' against clots and rats? (8)
7,8 2,6,10 etc stones on plate take one from the millennium (4,4)
12 At half 11 people try to keep one easy (10)
13 It's awful rot to work in string — the object is the colour (8)
14 Intelligence about the fearful hound mystery (3-3-2)
16 Sounds like a dead-heat going through the barrage (4,4)
19 Top nation? The idea is to divide uranium from deuterium (6)
20 The others are unemployed (4)
21 Boy said to be girl passed on (4)

Last week's solution

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